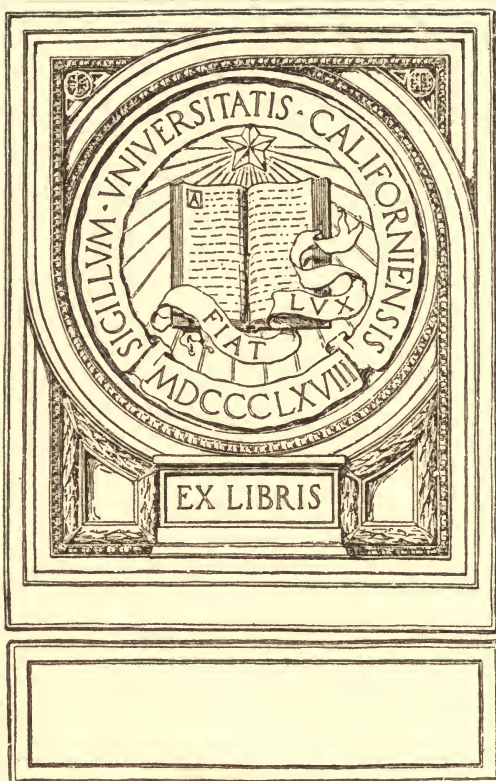


# Silas Deane

A Connecticut Leader  
In The American Revolution

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George L. Clark









# SILAS DEANE

A CONNECTICUT LEADER IN THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

BY

GEORGE L. CLARK

AUTHOR OF "NOTIONS OF A YANKEE PARSON"



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
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## PREFACE

THE reasons for a book on Silas Deane are in the following facts: he was prominent and influential in the movements leading to the Revolution; he was on important committees in the First and Second Continental Congresses; he was our first agent to France for the Insurgents; he forwarded military supplies, indispensable at Saratoga; he commissioned Lafayette, De Kalb, and Steuben; he served as Commissioner with Franklin and Arthur Lee, with whom he arranged and signed the treaties with France; unjustly recalled, he suffered for years from false and malicious charges; reduced to poverty and misery, he died when embarking on a new enterprise; fifty years later, Congress vindicated his memory from the charge of embezzlement; his life was woven in with critical events; his career was checkered; the mistake of his life was serious, the sufferings extreme, the fate—a dramatic close of the career of one of the most efficient of the men of the Revolution.

It is high time that the truth were told about Deane, in the interests of justice to a man so misunderstood and so wronged: because of the light thrown on critical years in which he was associated with Franklin, Morris, Jay, and others of their class; because of unexpected glimpses of shadows found in heroic times; because the study enables us to see more clearly the pillars on which our civil freedom rests, and the struggles and perils of those trying days.

In his endeavor to discover all the facts bearing on the case, to give all that seemed necessary toward forming a fair judgment of Silas Deane, and to present a clear view of his valuable services in behalf of his country in a crucial age, the author has been indebted to the librarians of the Connecticut Historical Society, the Watkinson Library, and the Connecticut State Library, and to his friend Edward Porritt, for many courtesies and suggestions.

The authorities consulted are the *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*; *Collections of the New York Historical Society*; *Correspondence of Samuel B. Webb*; Wharton's *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*; *Life and Works of John Adams*; *Works of Jared Sparks*; *Colonial Records of Connecticut*; Durand's *New*

*Material on the American Revolution; J. B. Perkins's France in the American Revolution; Lives of Franklin, Morris, and Jay; and articles in magazines.*

G. L. C.

Wethersfield, Connecticut.

*May 1, 1913.*





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# SILAS DEANE

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## CHAPTER I

### SILAS DEANE A MERCHANT IN WETHERSFIELD

IN the summer of 1633, venturesome and trying John Oldham gave the Massachusetts people a little rest, and ascended the Connecticut to the little Indian hamlet of Pyquag, a part of the sachemdom of the chieftain Soheag, who reigned at what is now Middletown, twelve miles down river.

Attracted by the glorious elms, rich and sightly uplands, broad meadows fertilized by freshets every spring, waters teeming with fish, it is no wonder that this pioneer in the following year led a band of adventurers from Watertown, Massachusetts, and building their log houses just beyond the space visited by the spring floods, they settled the ancient town of Wethersfield.

In the autumn of 1635, Winthrop tells us, "About

sixty men, women, and little children went by land toward Connecticut with their cows, horses, and swine, and after a tedious and difficult journey, arrived there."

The next period of a century and a half was likewise tedious. Welcomed by the friendly Indians along the river, as avenues of trade and allies against the dangerous Mohawks and Pequots, they bought a tract of land six miles square, laid out their roads, built their homes, their church and fortress, and entered upon a century and a half of hard work and peril. There were years when no one could be sure that a band of braves was not lurking in the forest for months, waiting for the right time for the midnight attack. Again and again the citizen soldiers marched out of the village streets on the Pequot campaign, to Deerfield, Albany, for deadly Havana, to Louisburg, Crown Point, Ticonteroga, and Quebec. The campaign of 1762 ended the long contest known as the "Old French War."

In that year, Silas Deane, a young lawyer from Yale, put up his shingle in the town of Wethersfield, which, despite its struggles and losses, had grown wealthy and prosperous with cultivating the soil, manufactures, and a brisk shipping trade.

Silas Deane, son of Silas Deane, a blacksmith of Groton, Connecticut, was born December 24, 1737, graduated from Yale in the class of 1758, taught school, after the custom of his time, studied law, and was admitted to the bar in 1761.

The prosperous town, which was to be his home for twelve years, had a population of 2500 inhabitants, and a grand list three quarters as large as that of Hartford. It was decidedly inviting to the young lawyer, who saw no necessity for starting at the foot of the ladder, but had the nerve to marry on October 8, 1763, Mehitabel, widow of Mr. Joseph Webb, five years his senior, and blessed with six children and a thriving store.

Squire Deane threw himself into commercial life with all his energy, and before long he was widely known as a man of enterprise, vigor, and good judgment.

In 1764, he built a substantial house just north of his store, and soon afterwards a boy, Jesse, his only child, was born. On October 13, 1767, his wife died of consumption, and later he married Elizabeth, daughter of Governor Gurdon Saltonstall of Norwich.

There was a large assortment in the population of Wethersfield during those twelve years, while Deane practised his calling of merchant, trader,

and politician. It ranged all the way from Mrs. Joseph Smith, who paid two pounds and ten shillings for a pair of red shoes, to the squaw slave owned by Rector Elisha Williams.

It startles us a little to think that in those days of blossoming freedom there should have been slaves in a Puritan village; but one in twenty-five was negro or Indian, and many of these humble people were slaves. The upright Leonard Chester owned a "Neager Maide," appraised at twenty-five pounds. Some of the slaves were offered their freedom if they would serve three years in the army.

We must not press too far the question as to the origin of these lowly helpers. We know the origin of the Indian slaves. Long enough the stealthy red men carried terror and loss to the hamlets by the Great River. No wonder some of their descendants were kept washing dishes and hoeing corn.

Whether negroes were brought home in Wethersfield sloops, odds and ends of human cargoes landed in Southern ports, it is perhaps neither discreet nor kind to ask. There were New England ships in the slave-trade. Thrifty captains left our ports for Lisbon, or the Canary Islands, "and a market"; the market was the west coast

of Africa, and on the return there came a load of blacks for the West Indies, Charleston, or Savannah.

While not exciting, there was much variety in the life of Wethersfield. A weekly paper, *The Connecticut Courant*, came to town from Hartford, four miles up river, after April, 1764. There was no post-office until April 1, 1794, and no stage-coach until after the Revolution, but a public wagon went through the town at intervals of a few days, for the town was on the great road from Boston to New York.

A central feature of the life of the village was the church, whose noble meeting-house was building when Deane was wooing Mehitabel; and in the church he had a prominent place. The records tell us that when the society voted to "discontinue the present method of lining out the Psalms," Colonel Chester, Deacon May, and Silas Deane were appointed to arrange the stations of those who should carry the principal parts of the singing.

It was at a time when the formalities of religion were rigidly required. It was an expensive thing to stay away from church. Not many miles down river the setting sun one Saturday found a man half-shaven, owing perhaps to a dull

razor or a week's tough growth of beard, but he was in church the next day with a muffler over his half-shaven face.

How much religion Deane drank in we do not know. His earlier letters contain occasional specimens of the language of religion, but after he went to France they became less frequent.

A wide variety of industries was carried on in the town. The first gristmill in the colony, "corne mill," it was called, was built on Mill Brook, a mile south of the village, in 1635. Later, windmills were used to grind grain, and sawmills were operated by wind and water. "Brick mills" prepared material for many substantial houses and capacious chimneys with their enormous ovens, on Fort Street, Sandy Lane, Jordan Lane, Main and Broad Streets. There were several tanneries at the time of which we write, and Ephraim Williams's account book, covering 1746 to 1760, gives an interesting story of a merchant currier and shoemaker, who received prices for boots and shoes which seem extravagant in our more economical days. Colonel Israel Williams of Hartford paid him four pounds for a pair of double-channelled pumps, and for a pair of double-channelled boots the price was fourteen pounds.

Boots were one of the extravagances which the Puritans did not give up: the leather in one pair would be enough for six pairs of shoes, and those great square-toed casings would last a lifetime, and become an heirloom. Captain Jonathan Robbins had several pairs of silk shoes made for his daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, and pumps for his son, Appleton.

When Washington was in town, a guest in the Webb house, in May, 1781, he was measured for a pair of boots by a first-class Wethersfield shoemaker.

The "smithy" was a far more important establishment than nowadays, for axes, chisels, ploughs, hoes, spades, nails, and spikes were made there, as well as shoes for horses and cattle. The fuel for the smithy was charcoal. There were so many coal pits in one section of the town it was called "Collier Swamp."

A prominent industry was pipe staves, mostly of oak, put up in bundles or "shooks" and shipped to the West Indies for hogsheads or casks for rum, molasses, and sugar.

There was a fulling mill, and a carding and weaving mill, though hand-loom weavers wove serges, kerseys, flannels, fustians, linsey-woolseys, tow-cloth, dimities, gingham, and jeans.



Clothiers and tailors were hard at work, and the year Deane reached town Rev. John Marsh was credited on Jonathan Buckley's account book with "making one pair Leather Breeches—four shillings, sixpence."

Hats, too, were "felted" from the fur of the muskrat from the river, and sold in New York.

Ropes and cordage were in great demand for the rigging of the ships made at Stepney, a hamlet of Wethersfield four miles below. Hemp was raised as early as 1640, and "hemp mills" and a rope-walk were indispensable.

Fish, a leading attraction to the early settlers, was abundant almost to superfluity in the river before the days of chemicals and sewage. Salmon and shad were sold in Hartford in 1700 for "less than a penny a pound." Fishes were sometimes piled up on a corner lot for sale: and it was considered disreputable for any but "poor folks" to eat shad. Apprentices, in binding themselves to their masters, frequently stipulated that salmon should not be served them as food oftener than twice a week. Fish made a first-class fertilizer: a shad in a hill of corn was as strong a plant food as a handful of phosphate.

The staple crops were grass, Indian corn, Indian beans, barley, rye, peas, onions, and

tobacco. Tobacco was a valuable export to the West Indies. The famous Wethersfield, large red onions were cultivated mainly by the women, who were seldom too high-minded to shrink from the lowly task of weeding them. Women were fond of bunching them; sitting around a heap of fragrant bulbs, they dressed off the butcher, dissected the doctor, did up the grocer, measured the tailor, sized up the shoemaker, hammered the blacksmith, and dozed over the minister.

We wish it were not necessary to mention another industry, but they did have distilleries. Farmers appreciated the still for it made a market for their rye, and on all occasions, from a barn raising to the ordination of the minister, flip was a favorite beverage.

Apples were common after 1750, when orchards began to come into bearing, and since there were scarcely any winter varieties, the juice of the apples could be preserved in barrels, to cheer and sometimes inebriate, through the long cold months. Cider was displacing at meals the beer, which the women had brewed as regularly and conscientiously as they made rye bread.

It was a neighborly kind of life the people lived; when farmers butchered, they exchanged spare-ribs and quarters of beef and lamb. The common

table ware was of pewter; there were no carpets in the spare room beneath the gambrel-roof, but what furniture there was, was substantial, well made, though not always comfortable. The cherry clocks, highboys, lowboys, chests, and oaken chairs which have come down to us speak of a sterling age.

The food of that time was varied. The Yankee cooks were skillful in concocting dishes whose mysteriousness would puzzle us to-day. No doubt there came upon Deane's table berries of all kinds, quinces, cherries, damsons, peaches, artichokes, grapes, and walnuts, put into all kinds of preserves, conserves, pickles, candies, syrups, and cordials. He enjoyed peas, turnips, carrots, cucumbers, beef, pork, lamb, geese, turkeys, and chickens. Potatoes had a limited use, but apples were wrought into tarts, shrub, dowdy, puff, and the celebrated pie. Pumpkin pie was also a famous dainty.

The store in which Deane did business stood high, and was reached by five long stone steps, one of which is in front of the present post-office. He kept a large variety of goods: flour, molasses, sugar, rope, knives, Barcelona handkerchiefs, sieves, fustian, buttons. In 1765, he advertised in *The Connecticut Courant* a quantity of choice

brandy, which he was willing to part with at a very low rate for cash, either by the hogshead, barrel, or keg, also hemp seed at twenty shillings a bushel.

The Great River was a convenient thoroughfare for extensive ventures, shipping lumber, barrel staves, horses, cattle, tobacco, and onions to the West Indies and Europe. Wethersfield was in full sympathy with the rest of New England in commercial activity. In 1760, the first lighthouse was erected on the coast, paid for by a lottery authorized by the General Assembly.

In 1768, Captain John Bulkley was running a sloop from Wethersfield to the Caribbean Islands, carrying oxen, horses, and cows. Trade was springing up with Ireland, whither was sent flaxseed, then and long afterward a staple production. Flour and lumber were carried to Gibraltar and Barbary. Vessels carried fish to Lisbon and Bilboa, and brought back wines. Lumber and potashes were shipped to England. Beef and pork loaded many a sloop bound for New York and the West Indies, bringing back molasses, sugar, and spices.

The river was a busy place, and the life of the young merchant was far from narrow in his store or at the wharves, fitting out vessels, corresponding

with business men near and far, caring for his large household, attending to the duties of the church and the merry social life, in that short breathing spell between the Old French War and the terrible Revolution, whose thunder clouds were beginning to fill thoughtful minds with dread.

## CHAPTER II

### DEANE'S ACTIVITY IN THE POLITICAL STRUGGLES BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

THE three river towns, Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor, held from an early date advanced views concerning the principles which led to the Revolution. Their settlement was due more to a democratic reaction against the aristocratic views of Winthrop and Cotton as to government, than to a desire for land. At first, the river towns were governed by a commission established by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but four years after the settlement began the people felt at liberty to govern themselves, and on January 14, 1639, the constitution of the new colony was adopted; and into that constitution was written Thomas Hooker's democratic theory of government.

Suffrage was granted to all free men, the principle of representative democracy was applied to the infant state without reservation, and authority was traced to the free suffrage of free men. This

famous document, the constitution of 1639, marks an epoch in the civil history of the world. It put into action for the first time the declaration made by Thomas Hooker, in his sermon, May 31, 1638, "that the foundation of authority is laid firstly in the free consent of the people."

Thus, for the first time in history, the delegates of Wethersfield, Hartford, and Windsor crystallized into a written constitution the principles of democracy, which for centuries had been slowly evolving in England, and later had such splendid expression in the Constitution of the United States, a constitution which has become the model for all democracies. It is the first written constitution defining its own powers. With such a past, we are not surprised that Wethersfield, in the time of Deane, had a keen interest in the political events that led to the Revolution.

Opposition to the Stamp Act was as pronounced in Connecticut as in the Bay Colony, and, as early as 1765, the Sons of Liberty from the eastern towns joined with those on the river in bold defiance of the obnoxious measure.

Jared Ingersoll of New Haven, the stamp-master newly appointed by the Crown, met with such determined resistance that he was obliged to resign his office. This opposition appeared first



in New Haven, New London, and Windham counties, but, evading the demand for his resignation, he started on horseback for Hartford where the General Assembly was about to meet. For a part of the way he was attended by Governor Fitch to protect him from insult. On his way up the river, when within a few miles of Wethersfield, Ingersoll was met by a party of four or five mounted men; half a mile farther he was met by a second squad, and they all rode silently together until they came to a company of five hundred freeholders, all mounted, and armed with long, heavy sticks, from which the bark had been peeled, giving them a resemblance to the staves of office carried by sheriffs and constables. This force, led by one Durkee, with two fully uniformed militia officers acting as aids, and heralded by three trumpeters, rode, two abreast; and with quiet courtesy, opening ranks to receive the stamp collector, they closed silently around and behind him. We think we can imagine his feelings, and the cool-headed, humorous Tory saw the comical side of the affair, for when one of his escort quizzically inquired of him what he thought of himself attended by such a retinue, Ingersoll, who chanced to be riding a white horse, quickly replied that he now had a clearer idea than ever before of

that passage in the Revelation, which speaks of "Death on a pale horse and all hell following."

Reaching the immense elm in front of the Colonel Chester mansion on Broad Street, the procession halted, and demanded that the matter be settled there. The stalwart farmers would brook no delay, and Ingersoll, reading the faces of his opponents, said, "The cause is not worth dying for," and wrote and signed his resignation. He was then persuaded to shout three times, "Liberty and Property." After dinner the mounted men attended Ingersoll to Hartford, where he again read his resignation and the Sons of Liberty dispersed.

Not long after this, the people of Wethersfield had an opportunity to show their spirit of opposition to the encroachments of King George. In April, 1768, the merchants of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York made a compact to unite in stopping the importation of goods from Great Britain. The Connecticut merchants kept the agreement with more fidelity than those of New York, and this led to a general convention of delegates from all the towns of the Connecticut colony to "take into consideration the perilous condition of the country, to provide for the growth and spread of home manufactures, and

to devise more thorough means for carrying out to the letter the non-importation agreement." The spirit of the people was manifested in the resolutions passed by the town meetings.

At a meeting held in Wethersfield, December 25, 1769, it was

Voted that it is and ever has been the opinion of this town that the late acts of Parliament commonly called the American Revenue Acts, imposing certain duties on paper, glass, etc., are in themselves unconstitutional, offensive, and tending to that total subversion of the liberties of his Majesty's subjects in America; that the opposition made thereto throughout the Continent has been noble, just, firm, and deserving of highest applause through every age.

That in particular the resolution against importing goods of merchandise from Great Britain, until said Acts are repealed, so genuinely and unanimously come into by the merchants in America, and so universally approved of by the people, is worthy of the highest commendation, as being the most effectual method for obtaining relief,—Do resolve to abide by the same, and as far as possible to prevent the least breach thereof by any of the inhabitants of this town or others: nor will we purchase nor use nor consume any goods imported contrary to said agreement, so universally come into.

And, for the more effectual preventing any counter-acting said resolution, we do appoint Messieurs. Silas Deane, Ezekiel Williams, Elisha Williams, David Webb, and Elias Williams, a committee, directing

them, with the utmost vigilance and care to guard against and prevent any attempt to put in execution so fatal and infamous a purpose as that of sacrificing the good of this Continent and their posterity to private gain and emolument: desiring them to correspond and consult with, as well as aid and assist, the other committees appointed in the neighboring towns and elsewhere for this purpose.

On February 20, 1774, when Connecticut merchants declared non-intercourse against the merchants of Newport, charging them with infraction of the non-importation agreement, designed to coerce England into a fuller acknowledgment of American rights, Deane was clerk of the meeting, and signed the circular.

Unwilling to wait for the formal action of the General Assembly in October, the people of Wethersfield met in the Congregational meeting-house in June, to express sympathy with Boston, which was suffering from the Port Bill. Resolutions of sympathy were passed, and a committee appointed to receive contributions from the people and forward them to Boston, and the first name on the list of contributors is Silas Deane. In October, 1772, Deane took his place with Captain Belden in the General Assembly, of which he was a member until two years later, when he was sent to the Continental Congress.

We look in vain for many exciting incidents in the legislation of those years. A large part of the energy of the law makers was exercised in appointing officers for the trainbands in the different towns. It was voted that Deane and three others be appointed a committee to receive money to be raised by a lottery, to erect buoys and other signals on Saybrook Bar.

It was voted, in 1772, that a horse thief should be fined and publicly whipped, and sent to jail for three months, and on the first Monday of the other two months, he was to receive publicly ten more lashes.

On May 21, 1773, a letter having been received from the House of Burgesses of Virginia concerning the support of the ancient, legal, and constitutional rights, it was voted in the Connecticut Assembly that a standing committee of nine be appointed, called a Committee of Correspondence, "whose business it shall be to obtain all such intelligence, and keep up and maintain a correspondence and communication with our sister colonies." Deane was the zealous and efficient secretary of this committee.

In the same year, he was appointed on an important committee concerning western lands, in the settlement of the Susquehanna Claims.

In March, 1774, the governor of Connecticut sent to the Earl of Dartmouth, a British Secretary of State, a letter complaining of the dissensions due to British aggression, and of the unlimited powers claimed by Parliament, which were driving the Americans to the border of despair; expressing deep sympathy with Boston, whose closed port had wrought such distress; and while insisting that the interests of the two countries were identical, yet calling for relief. One of the six men of the lower house appointed to confer with a committee of the upper house on this matter was Deane.

Evidently the young lawyer-merchant was giving good account of himself in the colonial Assembly, and in the movement which was leading up to the Revolution; and when, in 1774, it was proposed to hold in Philadelphia a Continental Congress, it was natural that Deane should be sent on the important mission of assisting in the organization of the colonies into unanimity and efficiency, to suppress disorder, and boldly resist the stupid endeavors of the British Ministry.

## CHAPTER III

### DEANE, SHERMAN, AND DYER REPRESENT CONNECTICUT IN THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

THE work of Deane on the Committee of Correspondence of the colony was so effective, and his reputation as a patriot of good judgment and devotion so high, that he was appointed to serve with Judge Roger Sherman of New Haven and Eliphalet Dyer of Windom to represent Connecticut in Philadelphia in 1774. On August 16 of that year, Deane wrote to Governor Trumbull to find the number and size of the ships of the colony, and a general statement of its imports and exports. He urged the importance of accurate accounts, and added, "I purpose setting out next Monday."

It was a great day for Wethersfield when their able young statesman, in the full vigor of his prime, set forth for Congress on Monday, August 22, 1774. He was thirty-seven years old; he had a wide acquaintance with the leading men in his own colony, and in the neighboring colonies. A



large number of the principal men of the town escorted him as far as Middletown, twelve miles down the river. His step-son, Samuel B. Webb, who was just twenty-one, attended him. Webb was commissioned lieutenant-major at Bunker Hill, and afterwards, through Deane's influence, he obtained a position on Washington's staff. The quality of the training of Webb under the eye of Deane is suggested by the charge which has come down to us: "Be master of your pleasures, and not let them master you. Let me urge on you patience and assiduity until you can be honorably advised. Master all the principles and movements of the great army."

They were joined at New Haven by Eliphalet Dyer, and at Fairfield, by Roger Sherman, and on Thursday, August 25, they reached New York, and put up at Hill's Tavern at the sign of the Bunch of Grapes.

In those days, before the lumbering stage-coach had appeared, Deane traveled in his own carriage, and there is an interesting comment on the extravagance which ignorant critics afterwards attributed to him in his village career. He wrote to his wife that while in New York he visited a carriage factory to learn the prices, and when he found that it would cost five pounds to



paint and regild his carriage he denied himself the luxury, fearing his money would not hold out till he reached home.

We let Deane tell the story of this expedition. Writing to his wife Elizabeth, he says:

We left the Bridge after dinner, and baiting by the way arrived in town at six. Instantly Mr. Bayard came up and forced us directly to the Exchange, where were the Boston delegates and two from South Carolina, and all the gentlemen of considerable note in the city in a mercantile way: when we had dined, and were passing around the glass, we went the round of introduction and congratulation, and then took our seats. The glass had circulated just long enough to raise the spirits of every one to that nice point which is above disguise or suspicion. Of consequence I saw that it was an excellent opportunity to know their real situation. Cool myself, I was not afraid of sharing in the jovial entertainment; therefore, after the introduction, I waived formality of sitting at the upper part among my brother delegates, and mixed up among the gentlemen of the city. I found many favorable to the cause and willing to go any length. I found they were fond of paying great court to Connecticut. We broke up at nine.

Deane gives an interesting glimpse of Judge Sherman, so famous later for his work on the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. He wrote his wife:

Mr. Sherman is clever in private, but I will only say he is as badly calculated to appear in such a company as a chestnut burr is for an eyestone. He occasioned some shrewd countenances among the company, and not a few oaths by the odd questions he asked, and the very odd and countrified cadence with which he speaks, but he was and did as well as I expected.

At that early time, Deane found traces of a spirit, which in later years was to bring him such keen misery. He says, "The more I converse in the city, the more I see and lament the virulence of party."

Judge Sherman's Puritan strictness was a trial to Deane, who wrote his wife on Sunday, August 28:

Heard Parson Treat in the forenoon and Mr. Ledlie in the afternoon. Mr. Sherman (would to heaven he were well at New Haven!) is against our sending our carriages over the ferry this evening because it is Sunday, so we shall have a scorching sun to drive forty miles in to-morrow.

Deane bought some new clothes in New York, and evidently the assortment was scanty, for he wrote, "I am not well suited, but took the best I found."

His letters are full of tender solicitude for his wife, whose health was evidently frail. He says:

Pray omit nothing conducive to your health and peace of mind. I have been really ill until this afternoon, when the villainous carelessness of the tailor so awakened me that I feel well. I go hence with an additional weight upon my spirits by reason of the uncertainty I am in, and remain in, as to your health.

Still heavier would have been his load, could he have realized that he would scarcely see her again. She died while Deane was in Paris.

At Trent Town it was hot. "I was worn," he says, "anxious, sick, went to bed after eleven, but could not sleep; I turned and turned, while Judge Sherman, who lodged in the same chamber, snored in concert."

Deane was pleased with the delegates from Virginia and other Southern States. "They appear," he says, "like men of importance, sociable, sensible, and spirited men."

We see the effects of their stimulus upon the Wethersfield legislator, when we read, "We are in high spirits when the eyes of millions are upon us, and consider posterity is interested in our conduct."

He speaks of the prospect of unanimity and of the willingness to undergo hardship

in the arduous task before us, which is as arduous and of as great consequence as ever man undertook, or

engaged in. I never met, nor scarcely had an idea of meeting, with men of such firmness, sensibility, spirit, and thorough knowledge of the interests of America as the gentlemen of the Southern provinces appear to be. May New England go hand in hand with them.

Yet with all his admiration for Washington, Henry, Randolph, and Dickinson, he is proud to represent Connecticut, and well he might be, for Connecticut entered the Revolution under singularly favorable conditions, passing as a whole from a royal colony into the revolutionary state by the alteration of a few words in the enactment of the legislature. In a moment the royal governor became the governor of a new state.

Not so was it with Massachusetts, rent by faction, the extreme revolutionists in control. Not so in New York, where royalty was strong, and the success of the popular party for a time doubtful; where wealth, position, and influence favored conservatism, and inclined toward neutrality.

Connecticut could act with greater freedom, directness, and force. Her trade with the West Indies and Europe gave her ready money, and furnished a body of hardy seamen. Connecticut had for generations been in the fire of Indian wars,

and through the Revolution General Washington turned repeatedly to the governor of Connecticut for counsel, men, and means. Governor Jonathan Trumbull was the "Brother Jonathan," on whom he depended in many a day of stress and anxiety.

Deane wrote from Philadelphia:

I see the Wethersfield company under Captain Chester appeared with honor on a recent occasion. This has made me an inch taller, though I am prouder as I may say of Connecticut than I dare express: not a colony on the continent stands in higher estimation among the colonies.

Congress met on September 7, and Reverend Mr. Duché offered a prayer which Deane said "was worth riding one hundred miles to hear; even Quakers shed tears."

He sketches Randolph, president of Congress,

as noble and dignified in appearance, and may be rising of sixty years: Mr. Henry, the lawyer, is the completest speaker I ever heard: Colonel Washington is tall, very young-looking, and of an easy, soldier-like air and gesture. He does not appear above forty-five. It is said that in the House of Burgesses, hearing of the Boston Port Bill, he offered to train and arm a thousand men at his own expense. Colonel Washington speaks very modestly and in cool but determined style and accent.

Little remains of the records of the doings of that first Congress. On September 23, he writes, "Business is slow from the vast extent and lasting importance of the questions."

Deane was elected with Sherman and Dyer by the colonial legislature to the second Congress, which met in May, 1775; but, before his second expedition to Philadelphia, an event occurred which gave him congratulation and praise.

The first conquest made by patriots was the capture of Fort Ticonteroga on May 10, 1775, by Colonel Ethan Allen.

The history of the origin of the enterprise, to which belongs the honor of compelling the first surrender of the British flag to the coming republic, has been made clear by J. H. Trumbull.

On Thursday forenoon, April 27, Colonel S. H. Parsons of Middletown arrived at Hartford from Massachusetts, eager for a project to surprise Fort Ticonteroga. This project was conceived in an interview which Parsons had with Benedict Arnold, captain of a company of volunteers, on their march to the camp at Cambridge. On that eventful Thursday, Colonel Parsons, Colonel Samuel Wyllys of Hartford, and Silas Deane of Wethersfield first undertook and projected taking the fort. A sum of three hundred pounds was

obtained from the treasurer of the colony, on the personal note of these men with three others, and the money was soon on its way northward; and a swift express was sent to Colonel Ethan Allen, requesting him to be ready with his valiant Green Mountain Boys.

This prompt action of Deane is in accord with a letter of his to Ebenezer Watson, of the *Courant*, in which he speaks of some who are too fearful of spending money, or of losing property. He says, "There is no alternative except to submit or prepare to resist even unto blood."

The success at Ticonderoga gave Deane some prestige in Congress, and with his experience with men, his energy, and address, we are not surprised to find him on important committees. A naval force was one of his favorite projects.

With Washington, Schuyler, and others he was appointed to consider means of procuring military supplies for the colonies, and with Washington to estimate the cost of equipping an army.

He formulated the rules for a continental navy and October 15, 1775, selected and purchased the first vessel for the service. He was also a member of the Committee of Secrecy, organized September 18, 1775, to purchase arms and ammunition in Europe.



On December 11, Congress appointed a strong Committee of Ways and Means for furnishing a naval armament. This committee numbered such men as Robert Morris and Samuel Adams, but Silas Deane was the chairman.

On May 26, 1775, Deane, with John Jay, Samuel Adams, and others, was appointed on a committee to send a letter to Canada.

June 14, Deane was appointed on a committee with George Washington to bring in a draft of rules and regulations for the army.

July 31, Deane was appointed on a committee with John Adams, Franklin, and others, to make inquiry in the recess of Congress about virgin lead and leaden ore, and the best methods of refining it.

On September 9, Deane was appointed on the committee of nine to import five hundred tons of powder, or saltpetre and sulphur, forty brass cannon, and twenty thousand good, plain, double-bridled musket locks, and ten thousand stands of good arms.

On September 21, Deane was appointed on a committee of five, to consider the best means of supplying the army with provisions.

There were very able men in those Congresses, men of the caliber of Thomas Jefferson, Robert



Morris, John Jay, George Washington, John Adams, and John Dickinson, and it is clear from the respect in which Deane was held, as shown by his appointment to the above and other committees, that he was regarded as in the first class of the strong men of the country.

Fragments of the debates have come down to us through John Adams's tireless Journal.

On September 23, Paine said: "We have not agreed to clothe the soldiers, and the quartermaster-general has no right to keep a slop shop any more than any one else."

Deane sprang to his feet and exclaimed: "The army must be clothed or perish. There is no preaching against the snow-storm. We ought to look out that the men are kept warm, and that the means of doing it be secured."

In reply to Sherman, who said, "The sutlers in the last war sold to the soldiers, who were not obliged to take anything," Deane replied, "The soldiers were imposed on by the sutlers in the last war."

On October 12, in the debate on the state of trade, Deane said: "We must have trade; I think we ought to apply abroad; we must have powder and goods; we can't keep our people easy without."

This will be developed in the next chapter, but we cannot conclude our story of Deane's career in Congress without referring to his acquaintance with George Washington.

On June 16, 1775, Deane wrote to his wife:

General Washington will be with you soon; elected to that office by the unanimous voice of all America. I have been with him for a great part of the last forty-eight hours in Congress and Committee, and the more that I have become acquainted with the man, the more I esteem him. He promises me to call, and, if it happens favorably, to spend the night with you. I wish to cultivate this gentleman's acquaintance and regard, for the great esteem I have of his virtues, which do not shine in the view of the world by reason of his great modesty, but when discovered by the discerning eye shine brighter. I know you will receive him as my friend, and what is more—his country's friend, who, sacrificing private fortune, independence, ease, and every domestic pleasure, sets off at his country's call to exert himself in her defense without so much as returning to bid adieu to a fond partner and family. Let our youth look up to this man as a pattern to form themselves by, who unites the bravery of a soldier with the most consummate modesty and virtue.

On June 18, Deane wrote again to his wife:

General Washington sets out on Thursday of this week. I have a strong temptation to accompany him quite to the camp. This morning, Colonel

Schuyler and I rode as far as the Falls at Schuylkill; our ride was to consult a plan we are forming for another bold stroke like that of Ticonteroga (which is become my nickname at times). People here, members of Congress and others, have unhappily and erroneously thought me a schemer; this has brought me rather more than my share of business in a commerical way.

He adds with a possible premonition of coming troubles:

I find, however, that he that has the least to do in public affairs stands the fairest chance of happiness. If General Washington sets out on Thursday, he will be in New York early on Saturday, where affairs will doubtless detain him until Monday or Tuesday, and in that case he will be with you on the Friday following. He is no lover of parade, so do not put yourself in distress. If it happens convenient, he will spend one night with you; if not, just call and go on. Should he spend a night, his retinue will doubtless go on to Hartford.

On June 22, Deane wrote again to his wife, "This will be handed you by his Excellency, General Washington, in company with General Lee and retinue."

On June 29, Deane wrote his wife:

I hope before this you have seen General Washington and friends on their way with health and spirits; the bearer of this is General Gates of Virginia, a general

of great experience in war, who leaves an affluent and independent situation for the service of the colonies. You will receive him with the respect due to his character.

On July 1, he writes:

I have the fullest assurance that these colonies will rise triumphant, and shine to the latest posterity, though trying scenes are before us. Tell my brother to get his vessel away as quick as possible somewhere or other, . . . I hope to see vessels of war on our side soon.

Deane strongly favored Putnam in preference to Wooster as general; he liked his bluff, hearty ways. "He is the toast of the army," he said.

On July 20, he wrote Mrs. Deane:

I am glad the good and virtuous of Connecticut are willing to stand by the resolution of Congress in the appointment of General Putnam. He does not wear a large wig, nor screw his countenance into a form that belies the sentiments of his generous soul. He is no adept either at politics or religious canting or cozening; he is no shake-hand body; he, therefore, is totally unfit for everything but fighting; that, I never heard these intriguing gentry wanted to interfere with him in. I have scarce any patience. O Heaven blast, I implore thee, every such low, narrow, selfish, envious manœuvre in the land, nor let one such succeed far enough to stain the fair page of American patriotic politics!

My principles are (the eye of my God knows them, and the most envious eye of man or the bitterest tongue of slander cannot find anything in my political conduct to contradict them) to sacrifice all lesser considerations to the service of the whole, and in this tempestuous season to throw cheerfully overboard private fortune, private emolument, even my life,—if the ship, with the jewel Liberty, may be safe. This being my line of conduct, I have calmness of mind which more than balances my external troubles, of which I have not a few.

This we regard as Deane's valedictory, in closing two terms in the Continental Congress. Associating with men of light and power, with Franklin, Washington, Jay, and Morris, he ranked with the best.

The reasons for his failure of an election to a third term are variously given. A letter from John Trumbull to Deane, October 20, 1775, may explain the situation. Speaking of the malice and envy of the freemen against him, he adds: "We have a strange people here as well as elsewhere, who say, 'It is dangerous to trust so great power as you now have for a long time in the hands of one set of men, lest they should grow too self-important, and a great deal of mischief in the end.'"

This brilliant excuse for pushing aside a tried and able man that some ambitious aspirant

might have his inning is elderly, and not yet decayed.

On November 26, 1775, Deane wrote his wife:

I am quite willing to quit my station to abler men. My long and thorough acquaintance with the genius of the Assembly prevents my being surprised at any sudden whim, or uneasy at any of their resolutions so far as they respect myself, individually. On a review of the part I have acted on the public theatre of life, an examination of my own genius and disposition, unfit for trimming, courting, and intrigues with the populace, I have greater reason to wonder how I became popular at all. What, therefore, I did not expect, I have too much philosophy to be in distress at losing. I only wish that my friends felt as easy on this occasion as I. I should be sorry that you or my friends should manifest any uneasiness on my being superseded. One of the greatest pleasures I enjoy is a consciousness of the rectitude of my intentions and conduct.

One of the last acts of the Naval Committee was to direct Deane to go at once to New York, buy a ship to carry twenty nine-pounders, and a sloop of ten guns, fit them out and send them through the Sound to New London for seamen, and to arm.

On December 15, he wrote his wife: "Naval preparations are now entering with spirit, and yesterday Congress chose a standing committee

to superintend this department of which I had the honor to be chosen one."

The last letter from Congress was written January 21, 1776, to his wife. He says:

Colonel Dyer pleaded, scolded, fretted, and even threatened to make me set out for home with him, and parted in ill humor. It is necessary to tarry, to close the naval accounts and assist in getting forward the preparation for the fleet in the coming season.

Connecticut had no occasion to be ashamed of any one of her representatives to the first and second congresses, but Deane had been in training for wider enterprise and a more responsible task,

## CHAPTER IV

### DEANE'S MISSION TO FRANCE

WHEN it was apparent that there was to be a struggle between the colonies and England, the question which disturbed every thoughtful man was, where shall we get the munitions of war? There were no facilities here for the manufacture of guns and powder.

In one of his early letters, Deane explained to the committee how the French made cannon, as though the industry were new to him and to his readers. The muskets first used in the Revolution were of every variety: plain weapons, made by village blacksmiths, useful for killing bears, deer, wild cats, and Indians. Agents went from house to house to obtain firearms; and the obstacles in the way of securing powder were overwhelming. After the battle of Lexington, it is said that there was not powder enough in the thirteen colonies for a week's fighting, and that English troops could have marched from Boston to Savannah with but slight resistance.



We the undersigned being the Committee of Congress in secret conference,  
do hereby certify whom it may concern, that the Honorable  
M<sup>r</sup> Jean Lequire, one of the Delegates from the Colony of Connecticut, is  
appointed by us to go into France, there to transact such Business, commercial  
and political, as we have committed to his care, in behalf & by authority  
of the Congress of the thirteen united Colonies. In Testimony whereof we have  
hereunto set our Hands and Seals at Philadelphia the second Day of  
March 1776.

B. Franklin,

Benj Harrison

John Dickinson

John Jay

Robt Morris



The Committee of Safety in New York wrote in July, 1775: "We have no arms, we have no powder, we have no blankets."

Whether or not the colonies could have won their independence without the aid of France is an interesting topic for conversation on the veranda, on a pleasant summer evening, but there are facts which stand out clearly in the Revolution, and one is that when Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga, and such standing was given thereby to the continental cause that a recognition of independence was made by the French Court on the following February, the British soldiers, as they laid down their arms, found themselves surrounded by muskets and fusils and a train of artillery which Silas Deane had sent over from France.

When Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, the victory was essentially French. The fleet, which was indispensable, was French, under the lead of Admiral de Grasse; the allied army numbered fifteen thousand men, and after the arrival of the French recruits who came with the fleet, Lafayette had under his command seven thousand French soldiers. At that time a man-of-war carried a small army; the entire strength of the fleet was twenty thousand men, and the

marines could furnish assistance for a land attack, so that we can say that one half the army was French. Furthermore, American soldiers were kept in the ranks by French money. Washington wrote Morris, August 17, that the American troops destined for the southern service must have a month's pay in specie. Morris made application to Count de Rochambeau for a loan of twenty thousand dollars. The necessity was so urgent, that Washington's usual calmness vanished. He wrote: "I cannot leave without entreating you in the warmest terms to send on a month's pay at least, with all the expediency possible—I wish it to come on the wings of speed." The French hard money put the men into a proper temper, and the victory at Yorktown was essentially French.

What has this to do with the mission of Silas Deane to France? Much every way. As early as September, 1775, John Adams proposed in Congress that application be made to Europe for military supplies. He clearly saw that it was one thing to conduct an irregular warfare with the Indians, or a long struggle with French and Indians when backed by British arsenals, but quite another thing to face the British Empire, armed with a few matchlocks bored by the village

blacksmith. Adams's proposition was rejected. "It was too much for the nerves of Congress," Adams wrote; "the grimaces, the convulsions were very great." Even the almost infallible Franklin objected to a virgin state "suitoring for alliances," but events ripened fast, and on November 29, 1775, a committee was appointed by Congress called the Committee of Secret Correspondence, whose members were among the most eminent and trusted fathers of the Revolution. The purpose of the committee was to "correspond with friends of the colonies in Great Britain, Ireland, and other parts of the world." Provision was made for defraying expenses, and paying such agents as the committee might send.

The country to which Congress naturally looked for help was France, the ancient rival and enemy of Great Britain; and the man who was chosen for a task, on whose success the prosperity of future campaigns so largely depended, was Silas Deane. It is scarcely necessary to repeat the varied and well-worn phrases of disparagement of the object of their choice. It is certainly remarkable that men of the caliber of Franklin, Morris, and Jay, who had been intimately associated with Deane during two terms of Congress, should have chosen a man for such a task,

without the most careful deliberation. They knew the difficulties and responsibilities before their agent, and the evidence of their confidence is in the following commission:

We, the undersigned, being the Committee of Congress for Secret Correspondence, do hereby certify whom it may concern that the Bearer, the Honorable Silas Deane, Esquire, one of the delegates from the colony of Connecticut, is appointed by us to and into France, there to transact such business, commercial and political, as we have committed to his care in behalf and by the authority of the Congress of the thirteen united colonies. In testimony whereunto we have set our hands and seals at Philadelphia, 2 March, 1776.

B. FRANKLIN  
BENJ. HARRISON  
JOHN DICKINSON  
JOHN JAY  
ROBERT MORRIS.

It was no light thing for Deane to leave his wife, whose health was frail, whom he was destined never to see again, and to part with his son Jesse, a boy of ten years who had never been well, to undertake a mission upon which the eyes of the whole country were fixed, and upon whose success so much depended. That he felt his responsibility appears from his parting letter to his wife, to whom he wrote:

I have, in one of the most solemn acts of my life, committed my son and what I have to your care, and the care of my Brother, confident that you will be to him a real mother, which you have ever been, and guard his youth from anything dangerous and dishonorable. I can but feel for the pain I must have given you by this adventure. You have in every situation discharged your duty as one of the best partners and wives, while on my part, by a peculiar fatality attending me from my first entry into public life, I have ever been involved in one scheme after another so as to keep my mind in constant agitation, and my attention fixed on other objects than my own immediate interests.

The present object is great: I am about to enter on the great state of Europe, and the consideration of getting myself well established weighs me down, without the addition of more tender scenes; but I am

“Safe in the hand of the protecting Power,  
Who ruled my natal, and must fix my mortal hour.”

It matters but little, my dear, what part we act or where, if we only act it well. I wish as much as any man for the enjoyment of domestic ease, peace, and society, but I am forbid experience in them soon; indeed, it must be criminal in my own eyes, did I balance them one moment in opposition to the public good, and the call of my country.

I hope to sail on Tuesday. May God Almighty protect you safe through the vicissitudes of time.

Deane set out on his journey early in March, 1776; sailing by the Bermudas and landing in



Spain, he escaped the British cruisers. He made his way over the Pyrenees, and after visiting several French cities, he arrived in Paris early in July. He entered upon his mission with caution and some embarrassment. Beaumarchais wrote: "M. Deane does not open his mouth before the English-speaking people he meets. He must be the most silent man in France, for I defy him to say six consecutive words in French."

If Deane was poorly supplied with French, he was well equipped with good advice. "On your arrival in France," began the letter from the committee of March 3, 1776,

you will for some time be engaged in the business of providing goods for the Indian trade. This will give you good countenance to your appearing in the character of a merchant, which we wish you to retain among the French in general, it being probable that the Court of France may not like it should be known publicly that any agent of the colonies is in that country. When you come to Paris, by delivering Dr. Franklin's letters to M. LeRay at the Louvre, and M. Dubourg, you will be introduced to a set of acquaintances, all friends to America. By conversing with them you will have a good opportunity of acquiring Parisian French, and you will find in M. Dubourg a man prudent, faithful, secret, intelligent in affairs, and capable of giving you very safe advice.



Thus the Wethersfield merchant was set adrift in the gay capital of Louis XVI, with the task of learning a new language, the customs and ways of a community decidedly different from that with which he had been accustomed, and also of securing goods indispensable to the cause of the patriots.

He was to hold out to France the prize of our commerce and to say:

If we should, as there is a great appearance we shall, come to a total separation from Great Britain, France would be looked upon as the power whose friendship it would be fittest for us to obtain and cultivate. The commercial advantages Britain had enjoyed with the colonies had contributed greatly to her late wealth and importance. It is likely a great part of our commerce will naturally fall to the share of France, especially if she favors us in this application, as that will be a means of gaining and securing the friendship of the colonies; and that, as our trade is rapidly increasing with our increase of people, and in a greater proportion, her part of it will be extremely valuable.

These brilliant prospects were not fulfilled. For years French merchants gained more bankruptcy than profit from the American trade, but it is well to put the best foot forward, and in a letter from the Secret Committee of October 1, 1776, we read:

If France will join us, in time there is no danger but the Americans will soon be established as an Independent Empire, and France, drawing from her the principal part of those sources of wealth and power which formerly flowed into Great Britain, will immediately become the greatest power in Europe.

If Franklin, chairman of the committee, wrote these alluring sentences he must have been pretty thoroughly converted to the advantages of the "virgin suitoring" in Europe.

The demands were not modest either.

The supply we at present want [they wrote] is clothing and arms for twenty-five thousand men, with a suitable quantity of ammunition and a hundred field-pieces; and that besides, we want great quantities of linens and woolens with other articles for the Indian trade, and that the whole, if France should grant the other supplies, would make a cargo which it might be well to secure by a convoy of two or three ships of war.

The payment for these stores is rather vaguely hinted at: for the linens, woolens, and goods for the Indian trade he was to ask no credit; and how this Connecticut Yankee was to be magician enough to stretch his little store of money, most of which was in bills, which were afterward returned protested, to cover so large a purchase, it is

hard to understand, and a good many of them have not been paid for yet.

As for the military supplies he was to say: "We mean to pay for the same by remittances to France or through Spain, Portugal, or the French islands, as soon as our navigation can be protected by ourselves or France." This cheerful information demanded friends both optimistic and altruistic.

Deane's programme was carefully laid out, and the words he was to convert into "Parisian French" were put into his mouth:

If you should find Vergennes reserved, and not inclined to enter into free conversation with you, it may be well to shorten your visit, request him to consider what you have proposed, acquaint him with your place of lodging, that you may stay some time at Paris, and that knowing how precious his time is, you do not presume to ask another audience, but that if he should have any communication for you, you will upon the least notice immediately wait on him. If at a future conference he should be more free, and find a disposition to favor the colonies, it may be proper to acquaint him that they must necessarily be anxious to know the disposition of France in certain points, which, with his permission, you will mention, such as whether, if the colonies should be forced to form themselves into an independent state, France would probably acknowledge them as such, receive their ambassador, enter into any treaty or

alliance with them, for commerce, or defense, or both.

It is clear that Franklin, Jay, and Morris had a high opinion of the good judgment and diplomatic skill of their agent, for he was not only to secure supplies, without which the war could not be prosecuted, and do it mainly with promises, and get the supplies past the watchful English men-of-war to America, but he was also to be the entering wedge for a treaty between the old world empire and the new republic.

In further conferences he was to enlarge on these topics, and defend the colonies against all calumnies. The committee adds:

When your business in France admits of it, it may be well to go into Holland and visit our agent there, M. Dumas, conferring with him on subjects that may promote our interest, and our means of communication. You will endeavor to procure a meeting with Mr. Bancroft near London, and desiring him to come over to him in France or Holland on the score of old acquaintance. From him you may obtain a good deal of information of what is now going on in England. It may be well to remit him a small bill to defray his expenses in coming to you, and avoid all political matters in your letters to him.

It was a narrow path in which the inexperienced commissioner was to walk. Alas, that the lane had

such turning as is suggested by the sentence which follows: "You will also endeavor to correspond with Mr. Arthur Lee, agent of the colonies in London."

On July 17, Deane was presented to the Minister of French Affairs, M. Vergennes, whose chief secretary spoke English well, and the interview lasted two hours. Many questions were asked on both sides: the French, eager to know more about the colonies; Deane, anxious to learn how the contemplated Declaration of Independence would be received in Europe.

Vergennes explained that since there was a good understanding between Versailles and London, France could not openly encourage the shipping of warlike stores, but no obstruction of any kind would be given; that Deane was to have a free hand to carry on any kind of commerce in the kingdom under the protection of the police and Vergennes, and he would do well to avoid all Englishmen as far as possible, as the British ambassador was on the watch. In reply to Deane's rose-colored prospects for trade, Vergennes condescended to reply: "The people and their cause are very respectable in the eyes of disinterested persons, and the interview has been agreeable."

Deane soon learned that in a late reform of the

French army they had shifted their arms to those of a lighter kind; the heavy ones, most of which were the same as new, to the number of seventy or eighty thousand, lay useless in magazines, with other military stores in some such proportion, and that it would be possible to get a supply of these through some merchant, without the Ministry being concerned in the affair.

Then came the tug; with four thousand pounds, and vague promises, Deane was to buy shiploads of merchandise, transport it to the seaboard,—in some instances two hundred miles,—provide vessels, and get them past the watchful British cruisers.

On August 16, he writes to the Committee of Correspondence:

Were it possible, I would attempt to paint to you the heartrending anxiety I have suffered in this time through a total want of intelligence; my arrival here, my name, my lodgings, and many other particulars have been reported to the British Administration, on which they sent orders to the British ambassador to remonstrate in high terms, and to enforce their remonstrance they despatched Wedderburn from London and Lord Rochford from Holland as persons of great interest and address here to counteract me. They have been some time here, and the city swarms with Englishmen, and as money purchases everything in this country, I have had, and still have, a most

difficult task to avoid their machinations. Not a coffee-house or theatre or other place of public diversion but swarms with their emissaries. I have seen many more of the persons in power, and had long conversations with them; their intentions are good, and they appear convinced, but there is wanting a great and daring genius at their head, which the Count Maurepas is far from being.

I must again remind you of my situation here: the bills designed for my use are protested, and expenses rising fast in consequence of the business on my hands. The quantity of stores to be shipped will amount to a large sum; the very charge on them will be great, for which I am the only responsible person.

Burdened as he was with care, Deane was full of courage and hope for the colonies, and through the summer and autumn of 1776 he devoted himself to his mission.

## CHAPTER V

### DEANE, VERGENNES, AND BEAUMARCHAIS

**I**N his early negotiations in France, Deane was embarrassed by highly recommended friends, to whom he was to apply. When Franklin was in Paris years before, he had become acquainted with a Dr. Dubourg, who translated some of Franklin's writings into French, and manifested an interest in the welfare of America. Dubourg sent long letters to Congress, assuring it of the readiness of France to assist the Americans; and when Deane, a stranger, reached the brilliant capital, he availed himself of his letter from Franklin to a man described as "prudent, faithful, secret, intelligent in affairs, and capable of giving very sage advice."

"I waited on M. Dubourg and delivered him Dr. Franklin's letter," Deane wrote, "which gave the good gentleman the most sincere and real pleasure."

Dubourg was only too willing to help; he had been interested in securing supplies for the colonies,



and he wished to be the intermediary between Deane and the French Ministry. Deane soon saw that he was too officious and indiscreet to be intrusted with important business. Dubourg talked too much about plans to assist America to suit Vergennes, who wished to have the government completely in the background.

Beaumarchais wrote the minister: "If while we close the door on one side, the window is open on the other, surely the secret will escape. Silence must be imposed on these babblers, who can do nothing themselves, and who hinder those who can do something."

In August, Deane was informed by Gerard, the first Secretary of Foreign Affairs, that he could rely on whatever Beaumarchais should engage in commercial supplies. In vain Dubourg remonstrated against the decision, the programme was settled, the French government was willing to open its arsenals to help America, but the aid was to be given through the agency and bookkeeping of the fictitious house of Roderique, Hortalez & Co., the head of which was Caron de Beaumarchais.

One would suppose that the French government would have chosen a merchant or speculator for the task, rather than an author, who, Dubourg bitterly said, was famous for large promises and for

his carelessness in money matters; but the result proved the wisdom of the choice, though it ruined the brilliant and devoted friend of the colonies.

The famous author of *Figaro* was born in 1732, in the shop of his father, Caron, a jeweller in the rue St. Denis. At twenty, he invented an improvement in the escapement in watches, and soon styled himself "Watchmaker of the King." By selling watches to courtiers at Versailles, and jostling against nobles and officials, he got together money enough to buy a little office, that of Controller of the Pantry of the King's Household, and he marched with the procession that carried the meat to the royal table; and he had the honor of placing some of the dishes before the king with his own hands; and then he stood watching the repast, with sword at his side. His next step upward was to marry a widow, a lady older than himself, and wealthy; and he took the name of Beaumarchais from a small fief belonging to his wife.

In 1761, M. de Beaumarchais, as he was now called, bought for eighty-five thousand livres an office of Secretary to the King, which imposed no duties, but conferred the rank of nobility. When taunted with being a plebeian, he replied that he could easily prove his nobility, for he held the

parchment that conferred it, and a receipt for the money that paid for it. That parchment did not destroy his democratic sympathy with his brothers in America, who were struggling against tyranny; and the author of *Le Mariage de Figaro* organized concerts, dipped into speculation, plunged into law, visited England, where he first became interested in American affairs through conversations with men prominent in opposition to Lord North.

Arthur Lee, a member of the Lee family of Virginia, was then studying law at the Temple. He, too, was as gifted a talker as Beaumarchais, and when the two men came together, the atmosphere was flavored and tinged with roses. We can hardly imagine that either believed all that the other said about his respective people, but Beaumarchais came to believe that the American insurgents were of surpassing power, and Lee was convinced that France would help the colonists to the limit of her strength.

Arthur Lee reported to Virginia that France would furnish five million livres' worth of arms and ammunition to the United States. This product of Lee's imagination and reckless tongue made no end of trouble.

Beaumarchais returned to Paris enthusiastic

in the cause of America, and suggested to the French government the advisability of lending aid to the colonies. In September, 1775, he submitted to the king a memoir, in which he predicted the triumph of America.

Durand, in *New Materials on the American Revolution*, says that Beaumarchais told Lee, in 1775, that he was trying to persuade Louis XVI, and Lee wrote the Secret Committee that in consequence of his active procedure with the French ambassador at London, "the Count de Vergennes has sent a secret agent to inform me that France could not think of going to war with England, but he is ready to send five million livres in arms and munitions of war, by way of St. Domingo, to the United States."

Not one word of this was true. Vergennes had not only not sent an agent to Arthur Lee, but Beaumarchais' frequent applications to the minister for secret aid in the shape of money and arms had been and were steadily refused. Not until months afterward was Vergennes ready.

On returning to Paris, Beaumarchais corresponded with Lee and, June 12, 1776, he wrote: "The difficulties I have found in my negotiations with the minister have determined me to form a company, which will enable munitions and powder

to be transmitted to your friend (Congress) on condition of his returning tobacco to St. Francis."

The youthful Louis XVI was not easily convinced, and if the advice of Turgot, the greatest statesman of France, had been followed, America would have received no encouragement. Turgot, who was Minister of Finance for two years from the summer of 1774, urged neutrality, retrenchment, reform, and the quiet development of France, wasted by the fearful Seven Years' War.

Maurepas, the aged head of the Cabinet, was without vigor, but Vergennes, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, adopted the cause of the colonies. Though a cold, calculating man, he was the most powerful friend America had in Europe through the war.

As a statesman, Vergennes was not in the same class as Turgot, but he was a man of decided ability. The Duc de Choiseul, Prime Minister of Louis XV, said of Vergennes: "The Compté de Vergennes has something to say against whatever is proposed to him, but he never finds any difficulty in carrying out his instructions. Were we to order him to send us the vizier's head, he would write that it was dangerous, but the head would come."

This powerful friend of America, more than any

one else, brought the king to our side, though, Sparks says, it was largely due to Beaumarchais that the king was persuaded. On December 7, 1775, Beaumarchais wrote a letter, which was given to Louis XVI by Vergennes, urging him to assist the United States. That letter is said to have turned the scale.

Vergennes was neither a courtier nor a selfishly ambitious man: his habits were simple, clear-headed, and trustworthy. Jefferson says: "I found him as honorable, as frank, as easy of access to reason as any man I have ever done business with."

Said James Madison: "He is the great minister of European affairs, cool, reserved in political conversation, free and familiar on other subjects."

Vergennes believed that the loss of the colonies would so seriously cripple England that she could no longer disturb France. He also felt the wave of republicanism which was sweeping over France in sympathy with the insurgent spirit across the Atlantic. He likewise believed that the independence of the colonies would greatly advance the commerce of France.

When the ice in Vergennes did not take fire on the reception of Beaumarchais' memorial, the impetuous dramatist wrote again on the following day, complaining that the Council had taken no

action. "All the wisdom of the world," he wrote, "will not enable a man to decide on the policy he should pursue if he receives no answers to his letters. Am I an agent who may prove useful to this country, or am I a deaf and dumb traveler?"

In December, he addressed another long memorial to his sovereign, who had maintained silence. He insisted that Louis owed it to his people to weaken their ancient foe, and ended his harangue with the pious prayer, "May the guardian angel of the state incline the heart and mind of your Majesty."

Two months later, he sent another long communication to the crown, declaring that the quarrel between England and America would divide the world and change the system of Europe, and every person should consider how the impending separation would work for his own gain or loss.

This letter discloses the hand of the scheming Arthur Lee:

A secret representative of the colonies in London, discouraged by the failure of his efforts through me to obtain from the French ministers supplies of powder and munitions of war, said to-day: "Has France absolutely decided to refuse us all succor, and thus become the victim of England and the laughing-stock of Europe? We offer France in return



for secret assistance a treaty of commerce, which will secure to her for a number of years after the peace all the benefits which for a century have enriched England."

Beaumarchais proposed to the king the scheme of which he spoke to Arthur Lee, a scheme by which France could aid the colonies and not become involved in war with England. He said: "If your Majesty has not a better man to employ, I will undertake the enterprise and no one shall be compromised. My zeal will better supply my lack of capacity, than the ability of another could replace my zeal." The plan was acceptable to Vergennes, who in May wrote to the French ambassador at Madrid that the king had decided to lend the Americans a million livres, though he would hardly venture to furnish arms and munitions of war; and it would be done in the name of a commercial firm, which would color its zeal by the appearance of a desire to engage in the American trade.

The prospect of repayment was slender, for the company would furnish securities—"to tell the truth, not very binding."

The Spanish king promised to send another million livres.

With the powerful backing of Vergennes,



Beaumarchais formed his imaginary house of Roderique, Hortalez & Co., and through the Spanish, high-sounding, mythical firm, supplies were forwarded from the French arsenals to the insurgents in America.

To supply money above that furnished by the state, Beaumarchais planned a speculation on his own account, which might prove profitable, if his ships were not captured by the English, and he could get his pay.

On June 10, 1776, the French government advanced a million livres, and Beaumarchais executed the receipt, and two months later another million arrived from Spain.

Early in July, a new actor appeared in Paris, Silas Deane, with a commission from Congress to purchase supplies to be paid for by cargoes shipped from the colonies. On applying to Vergennes, he was referred to Beaumarchais, who offered to ship merchandise to the credit of Congress to the amount of three million livres.

Deane wrote Franklin and Morris on August 15:

I find M. Beaumarchais, as I before hinted, possesses the entire confidence of the Ministry; he is a man of wit and genius, and a considerable writer on comic and political subjects; all my supplies are to come through his hands.

On August 18, 1776, Beaumarchais wrote the Committee of Congress:

An extensive commercial house has been formed solely for the purpose of serving you in Europe, to supply you with necessaries of every sort, clothes, linen, powder, ammunition, muskets, cannon, or even gold for the payment of your troops, and in general everything that can be useful for the honorable war in which you are engaged.

He gives them to understand that return must be made. He says: "I request of you, gentlemen, to send me next spring ten or twelve thousand hogsheads, or more if you can, of tobacco from Virginia of the best quality." He also suggests that he could handle cargoes of salted fish.

Lee's officious and imaginative talk about the supplies being a gift made a deeper impression on Congress than Deane's and Beaumarchais' appeal for payment, and the Secret Committee never sent any reply to Roderique, Hortalez & Co., though they received the supplies, and put off paying the unlucky firm.

In February, Beaumarchais sent a letter to the king, in which he showed that if a million livres could be furnished Hortalez & Co., and tobacco be promptly received in payment and sold at Beaumarchais' romancing prices, by the time the

king had invested a second time the profits of the scheme, the Americans would receive two millions in gold and seven millions in powder and this would increase in geometrical proportion, using three as the multiple.

The Iago in all this mixture of confusion and depravity was Arthur Lee, the political enemy of Beaumarchais and Deane, who was determined to advance himself, though he ruined every one who stood in his way. ✓

When Deane arrived in Paris, and Beaumarchais no longer communicated with Arthur Lee,

The latter [says Sparks] was disappointed and enraged against Deane, no less than against Beaumarchais. To avenge himself on both, Lee wrote the Committee of Congress that the two men had agreed to deceive at once the French and the American governments, by changing what the French minister meant to be a gratuitive present into a commercial operation.

De Lomenie says he has found among Beaumarchais' papers proofs that the shipments were carefully inspected by American agents, and Deane and Beaumarchais were surprised that Virginia and Maryland tobacco did not arrive. Neither took account of Arthur Lee.

The headquarters of the flourishing and ill-

starred firm of Roderique & Co. were in the Faubourg du Temple, in a large house in which the Dutch ambassadors had lived. Many clerks were installed there, and the author of *Figaro* was to be found there early and late, overseeing the activity of the clerks with energy, if not with business methods.

One would not use the term "hard-headed" in speaking of a merchant who wrote in business letters such sentences as these :

Your deputies, gentlemen, can find in me a sure friend, and asylum in my house, money in my coffers, and any means of facilitating their operations. I promise you that my indefatigable zeal shall never be wanting to clear up difficulties, soften prohibitions, and facilitate the operations of a commerce which your advantage, more than my own, has made me undertake.

Of the activities of Beaumarchais, we shall speak more in detail in the next chapter. We wish we were not obliged to record the sequel to this altruistic and enthusiastic endeavor. No tobacco was sent by the colonies to the Hortalez firm. Its agents at Nantes and Boulogne strained their eyes to see the ships, with thousands of hogsheads of the best Virginia tobacco, coming up the harbor. Beaumarchais received not even

a letter acknowledging the receipt of the supplies. In October, he wrote: "There is no news from America and no tobacco either. This is depressing, but depression is a long way from discouragement."

The mischievous and pernicious activity of Arthur Lee was bearing fruit. Lee, who seemed incapable of telling the truth, kept writing Congress that the munitions of war were not to be paid for. "M. Vergennes," he wrote, "has repeatedly assured us that no return was expected for the cargo sent by Beaumarchais. This gentleman is not a merchant; he is known to be a political agent employed by the Court of France."

Even if France had advanced two hundred thousand dollars, the supplies sent by Beaumarchais amounted to several times that amount; and when Lee said the supplies were a gift of France, he lied and he knew it, and he knew also that when he suggested that the demands of Beaumarchais and Deane would fill their pockets with illegal gains, his lies were still more fiendish, for he was plotting the ruin of two honest and devoted men, whose earnestness and fidelity his miserable soul could not appreciate. ✓

Congress was perplexed and, being short of funds, did nothing. It is hard enough to pay

one's honest debts out of a full pocket; the payment of a questionable claim causes a beggar little worry.

Franklin had little confidence in the Roderique, Hortalez & Co., and declared to Deane that he would have nothing to do with any transactions arranged before his arrival. When Coudray, on reaching America, was furious against Beaumarchais, Congress was puzzled.

Imagine [says De Lomenie] the effect on sober Yankees, nearly all of whom had taken part in commercial transactions before the war, receiving cargoes almost always shipped clandestinely in the night, with invoices more or less correct, and the whole, with no other advices than the somewhat hasty missives over the romantic signature of Roderique & Co. in which Beaumarchais mingled together enthusiastic protestations, an unlimited tender of services, political advice, and demands for tobacco and codfish.

Shrewd Yankees were naturally led to think that such a person, so ardent and fantastic, if he really existed, was playing a commercial comedy, understood between him and the French authorities, and that they might use his supplies, read his amplifications, and dispense with sending tobacco.

The brilliant firm of Hortalez & Co. was in dire straits. Beaumarchais extracted another million from the depleted French treasury, but that did

not cover the bill. Beaumarchais wrote repeatedly for payment in tobacco, indigo, anything. Arthur Lee kept repeating his rascally lies, assuring Congress that the demands were parts of a French comedy, or attempts to cheat Congress, and defeat the generous programme of Louis. At last, a cargo of rice and indigo reached France, which the envoys said was intended for them, but Beaumarchais begged so hard, he secured it, though it was worth but a hundred and fifty thousand livres

You will see [he wrote his agent in America] that there is a great difference between this drop of water and the ocean of my debts. I am contending with obstacles of every nature, but I struggle with all my might, and I hope to conquer with patience, credit, and money. The enormous losses to which all this puts me appears to affect no one. The minister is inflexible; even the deputies at Passy claim the honor of annoying me—me, the best friend of their country.

In December, 1777, Beaumarchais sent M. Francy to America to see if he could get a settlement of past accounts. "Be like me," he charged him; "despise small considerations and small resentments; I have enlisted you in a magnificent cause."

As the result of Francy's journey the treasuries were put on a surer basis—at least, on paper.



A carefully drawn contract was made, but the bills remained unpaid.

An appeal was made to Vergennes, asking his advice.

We do not know [the Committee said] who the persons are who constitute the house of Roderique & Co.; but Congress has ever understood, and so have the people in America in general, that they were under obligations to his Majesty's good will for the great part of the merchandise and warlike stores heretofore furnished under the firm name of Roderique, Hortalez & Co.; we cannot discover that any written contract was ever made between Congress or any agent of theirs and the house of Roderique & Co., nor do we know of any living witness or any other evidence, whose testimony can ascertain for us, who the persons are who constitute the house of Roderique & Co., or what were the terms upon which the merchandise and munitions of war were supplied, neither as to the price, nor the time, nor the conditions of payment.

We apprehend that the United States hold themselves under obligation to his Majesty for all those supplies, and we are sure that it is their wish and their determination to discharge the obligation as soon as Providence shall put it in their power. In the meantime we are ready to settle and liquidate the accounts according to our instructions, at any time and in any manner, which his Majesty and your Excellency shall point out to us.

In reply to this beautiful letter Vergennes did not and could not make any clear statement.



He could not acknowledge any responsibility for Roderique & Co. in furnishing munitions of war to America, while England and France were at peace; he wrote the newly appointed minister to the United States:

The king has not furnished anything, he has simply allowed M. de Beaumarchais to provide himself with what he wanted in the arsenals, on condition of replacing what he took; and that for the rest, I will gladly interpose in order that they may not be pressed for the payment of the military supplies.

In January, 1779, John Jay, president of Congress, extended an eloquent vote of thanks to Beaumarchais as follows:

Sir, the Congress of the United States, sensible of your exertions in their favor, present you with their thanks, and assure you of their regard.

They lament the inconvenience you have suffered by the great advances made in support of these states. Circumstances have prevented a compliance with their wishes; but they will take the most effectual measures in their power to discharge the debt due you.

The liberal sentiments and extensive views, which could alone dictate a conduct like yours, are conspicuous in your actions, and adorn your character. While with great talents you served your Prince, you have gained the esteem of this infant Republic, and will receive the united applause of the New World.

This must have been very gratifying to a man who enjoyed applause as did Beaumarchais, and in December he sent over another fleet laden with arms and supplies; he also equipped a man-of-war named *Fier Roderique*, and sent it to guard the merchantmen, at his own expense, and to his personal loss.

The United States did make some payment, not in tobacco, which could have been turned into money, but it remitted two million and a half of livres in bills, payable three years in the future. These scanty promises of a precarious government would not have been paid at all, had not Dr. Franklin insisted upon it.

At last Beaumarchais' money and zeal gave out, and the rich nobles, who had helped him, showed little indulgence. In 1781, Silas Deane sought the settlement of Beaumarchais' claims, for Deane never wavered in the declaration that the supplies should be paid for.

In November, 1776, Deane wrote Congress:

I never should have completed what I have done but for the indefatigable and spirited exertions of M. Beaumarchais, to whom the United States are on every account greatly indebted; more so than to any other person on this side of the water; he is greatly in advance of stores, clothing, and the like, and there-

fore I am confident that you will make him the earliest and most ample remittance.

Deane went over the accounts and found the balance due Beaumarchais was three million six hundred thousand livres, but Lee's lies and Deane's calamities furnished excuses for Congress to postpone Beaumarchais' claims.

In 1787, with accounts ten years old, Beaumarchais wrote Congress complaining of the ingratitude of a powerful nation, and it was voted to refer the account to Arthur Lee, who, following his false genius, and consistent with his willingness to ruin Beaumarchais, declared that the goods furnished by Roderique & Co. were gifts, and that Beaumarchais owed the United States almost two million livres.

In 1793, Alexander Hamilton examined the claims and set the sum due M. Beaumarchais at two million two hundred and eighty thousand livres at least, and possibly a million more, but Congress made no appropriation.

Ruined by the French Revolution, Beaumarchais fled to Hamburg, and from his garret and poverty, ill and broken-hearted, he wrote: "Americans, I served you with untiring zeal. I have thus far received no return for this but vexation and disappointment, and I die your creditor. On leaving

this world I must ask you to give what you owe me to my daughter as a dowry."

Twenty-nine years later, after repeated endeavors for justice, Beaumarchais' daughter went to Washington and solicited payment of the prosperous nation, and eleven years later, fifty-seven years after the debt was incurred, the heirs were told they would receive twenty-five cents on a dollar, if they would sign a receipt in full. They did so to the shame of the young Republic!

Such was the treatment of a man of whom Deane wrote Congress in November, 1776:

I cannot in a letter do full justice to M. Beaumarchais for his great address and assiduity in our cause; I can only say he appears to have undertaken it on great and liberal principles, and has in the pursuit made it his own. His interest and influence, which are great, have been exerted to the utmost in the cause of the United States, and I hope the consequences will equal his wishes.

The consequences of what he did for America have more than equaled his expectations, but what can we say of his share in the prosperity, to achieve which he gave such altruistic, such unstinted, devotion?

## CHAPTER VI

### DEANE FORWARDS MILITARY SUPPLIES

WHEN Deane presented to Vergennes on July 17, 1776, his credentials as agent for America, he was not authorized to hint that the colonies aimed at independency, though the Declaration of Independence had been issued nearly two weeks before he reached Paris. The only ground of his appeal was that no people should be taxed without their consent.

That France had been pitched on for the first application, from an opinion that if we should, as there is a great appearance we shall, come to a total separation from Great Britain, it is likely a great part of our commerce would naturally fall to her share. That the supply we at present want is clothing and arms for twenty-five thousand men, with a suitable quantity of ammunition and a hundred field-pieces.

The French Ministry evaded all responsibility, but told Deane he must do all business with Roderique, Hortalez & Co.—in other words, with Beaumarchais; and the negotiations began

with the promise of remittance within eight months of the time of the delivery of the goods.

On August 2, Deane wrote the Committee of Congress: "A number of gentlemen of rank and fortune, who have seen service and have good character, are desirous of serving the United Colonies and have applied; pray let me have orders on this subject." Though sharply criticized later for sending over so many French engineers and officers, it is significant that his request for instructions was unheeded, and he was left entirely to his own judgment.

Deane was especially impressed with M. Coudray "who had the character of the first engineer of the kingdom," Deane said, "and his manners and disposition will, I am confident, be highly pleasing to you, as he is a plain, modest, active, sensible man, perfectly averse to frippery and parade."

In November, Deane wrote:

M. de Coudray, who has the character of being one of the best officers of artillery in Europe, has been indefatigable in our service, and I hope that the terms I have made with him will not be thought exorbitant as he was a principal means of engaging the stores.

The letters of Deane are full of anxiety. On July 20, he asked Beaumarchais for two hundred

brass cannon, and arms and clothing for twenty-five thousand men, and desires still more. Four days later he wrote:

The fate of my country depends on the arrival of these supplies. I cannot be too anxious on the subject, nor is there any danger or exposure so great, but what must be hazarded, if necessary, to effect so capital and important a subject.

Two days afterward Beaumarchais wrote:

I do not think so large a train of artillery as you desire can leave this country without a chief and officers, for among a nation as peaceful as the Americans, all knowledge of the tactics must be unknown, and the proper management of a train of artillery is the most difficult branch of the tactics. You ought not, therefore, to hesitate in adopting Mr. Arthur Lee's former plan of sending engineers and officers, particularly officers of artillery. If you approve of the plan, it shall be my duty to tempt the best ones of their class, especially soldiers of fortune. Here there should be no effort at economy.

Coudray was a striking sample of the soldiers of fortune engaged. Deane wrote the Secret Committee that, dissatisfied with an idle life, he was willing to be advanced from his position as an adjutant-general in the French service, to be general of artillery in the American forces, with the rank of major-general.

It is clear that the French were determined to lump officers and supplies, and apparently Deane had no alternative, he must take both or neither, for he adds:

Considering the importance of having two hundred pieces of brass cannon with every necessary article for twenty-five thousand men provided, with an able and experienced general at the head, warranted by the Minister of the Court, with a number of fine and spirited young officers in his train, and all without advancing one shilling, is too tempting an offer for me to hesitate about, though I own there is a silence in my instructions.

In our judgment of Deane for sending over so many officers as he did, we are also to remember how eager they were to come. Franklin wrote to Lovell, October 17, 1777:

You can have no conception of the arts and interest made use of to recommend and engage us to recommend very indifferent persons. The opportunity is boundless; the numbers we refuse incredible, which, if you knew, you would applaud us for, and on that account excuse the few we have been prevailed upon to introduce to you.

On September 11, Deane signed an agreement with General Coudray to have the pay of major-general, and wrote, "He will exert himself in despatching the artillery and stores agreed on."



Coudray was a disappointment: the noble qualities Deane had discovered in him were only skin-deep. He set sail in the *Amphitrite* with a large cargo of stores, but soon the vessel returned to port by order of the officious Coudray and against the protest of the captain. The officers complained of a lack of livestock. Evidently the gallant general, Coudray, found the menu less appetizing than in the Paris banquet halls. Deane wrote bitterly:

The consequences have been bad. This I must say: He acted an unwise and injudicious part in returning into port; he gave a fresh alarm to the Ministry and occasioned a second counter-order. Indeed, Mons. de Coudray appeared to have solely in view his own ease, safety, and emolument. He returned quite to Paris, without the least ground that I can find for his conduct, and has laid his scheme to pass to America in a ship without artillery, which is absurd, as I engaged with this man solely on account of the artillery he was to assist in procuring and attending in person. His desertion of this charge, with his other conduct, makes me wish that he may not arrive in America at all.

Coudray finally brought his officious and conceited presence across the Atlantic. Then came troubles innumerable; the arrangement was that he should command the artillery; there sprang up

a plentiful crop of resignations: Coudray would have everything or nothing. His inflexible will paid no regard to the situation. The difficulty was relieved when Congress created for him the office of inspector of the artillery with the rank of major-general. Coudray refused this, and entered the army as a volunteer, with the rank of captain; but, by what Franklin called "a happy accident," on September 16, 1777, he was drowned in the Schuylkill, and the rest of his corps returned to France.

More conspicuous still was the episode concerning Comte de Broglie. The following is what Deane wrote the Committee of Secret Correspondence December 6, 1776, on a matter which brought sharp criticism upon the head of the writer:

I submit one thought to you, whether, if you could engage a great general of the highest character in Europe, such for instance as Prince Ferdinand, Marshal Broglie, or others of an equal rank, to take the lead of your armies, such a step would not be politic, as it would give a character and a credit to your military, and strike perhaps a greater panic in our enemy. I only suggest the thought, and leave you to confer with Baron de Kalb on the subject at large.

The candidate for the position of commander-in-chief of the American forces was Comte de Broglie,

who belonged to a family which had furnished two marshals to France. He was a soldier of experience and energy, and it is not strange that when his cause was urged by Baron de Kalb, Deane, overburdened with work and perplexity, and shouldering alone the task of commission, unaided by advice from Congress, should have listened with sympathy. On November 6, he wrote the Committee:

Comte de Broglie, who commanded the army of France in the last war, did me the honor to call on me twice yesterday with an officer who served as his head quartermaster-general and has now a regiment in the service. He is desirous of engaging in the service of the United States. I can by no means let slip the opportunity of engaging a person of so much experience, who is by every one recognized as one of the bravest and most skillful officers in the kingdom.

Just a month later, Deane proposed to the Secret Committee that De Broglie be engaged to take the lead in the army, "I only suggest the thought," wrote Deane, "and leave you to confer with Baron de Kalb." Ten days later De Kalb argues that a military leader of great European reputation would be worth twenty thousand men. It is not strange that Deane was impressed with the idea that a man brought up in war, with such a reputation as Broglie, would be of great value to

the American cause. Deane was having a hard time.

Well-nigh embarrassed to death [he writes], with applications of officers to go out to America, bills protested, credit poor in Paris, and worse in Amsterdam, reports of the disaster on Long Island, the burning of New York, and of negotiations with England rendering the French Ministry wary and distant, no orders, advices, or remittance.

On December 4, he wrote Robert Morris that in eight months he had received but two letters from Congress. "Every one here judges," he writes, "you are negotiating, or giving up the cause, and the British ambassador and agents roundly assert it."

His anxiety and distress were greater than at any other time in his life. In the midst of all this wearing, perplexing, discouraging medley, we should not criticize too severely the man for mildly suggesting the project of securing a commander-in-chief of European reputation for the American forces. Washington had a high reputation, and Deane had great respect for his ability, but he still had his spurs to win. We smile with pitying compassion at the folly of displacing the majestic George Washington with a little Frenchman, whose head stood erect, as one contemporary

said, "like a bantam cock"; his sparkling eyes, when he was excited, were like a volcano pouring forth fire; with the fame of the Seven Years' War resting on his pompous shoulders. De Kalb went over to America as advance agent of this fierce little second-rate officer. De Kalb had the utmost confidence in De Broglie and submitted to him a project, of which he said that it "would perhaps decide the success of the cause of liberty in the United States. Congress should ask of the king of France some one, who would become their civil and military chief, the temporary generalissimo of the new republic." De Kalb speaks considerably of Washington; thinks he has done fairly well.

But my plan is [he says] to have a man whose name and reputation alone would discourage the enemy. Many young noblemen would follow him as volunteers for the sake of serving and distinguishing themselves under his eyes. The nobility, by its interest at Court, by its credit, or the management of its friends and kinsmen, could decide the king in favor of a war with England. . . . Such a leader, with the assistants he would choose, would be worth twenty thousand men, and would double the value of the American troops. This man may be found, I think I have found him, and I am sure that once he is known, he will unite the suffrages of the public, of all sensible men, of all military men, and I venture to say of all Europe.

We are amused at the suggestion that follows that this fiery little fountain of emotion and egotism needed to be wooed like a coy maiden. De Kalb continues:

The question is to obtain his acceptance, which as I think can only be accomplished by loading him with sufficient honors to satisfy his ambition, as by naming him Field Marshal Generalissimo, and giving him a considerable sum of ready money for his numerous children; the cares of whom he would have to forego for some time during his sojourn beyond the seas, to be equivalent to them in case of the loss of their father, and by giving him all the powers necessary for the good of the service.

De Kalb planned to go over to America on the *Amphitrite* in December, with the promise of the rank of major-general together with twelve thousand livres for expenses; and his great mission was to convince the rustics in America that a man of elevated rank and large experience called generalissimo, with supreme authority over the army, and a large pension for life, would splendidly replace the provincial Washington, and reimburse by a hundred-fold all the expenses of the costly venture.

It is unfair to shoulder all this variegated bubble upon the worried and overworked Deane; De Kalb was the prime mover in behalf of his modest

little chief. "I leave this unsigned," adds De Kalb; "you know who I am."

Broglie had remained quietly at his country seat at Ruffec, while De Kalb was working so faithfully for the prosperity of America, by pleading the interests of its mighty deliverer. In the spring of 1777, De Kalb embarked with Lafayette on the *Victory*, and when he reached America all his dreamy mists of delusion vanished, after he had entered the presence of Washington, and had seen the greatness of his character, the breadth and force of his mind, his courage and his success. De Kalb was shrewd enough to see that the colonies had no need of a brilliant French officer to give them the victory. In September, 1777, he wrote to General Broglie:

If I return to Europe, it is largely on account of the impossibility of succeeding in the great project with which I occupied myself with so much pleasure. M. de Valfort will tell you that the proposition is impracticable. It would be regarded as a crying injustice against Washington, and an affront to the honor of the country. He does every day more than could be expected from any general in the world in the same circumstances, by his natural and acquired capacity, his bravery, good sense, uprightness and honesty, to keep up the spirits of the army and people, and I look upon him as the sole defender of his country's cause.



Perhaps the most distinguished man whom Deane commissioned was Lafayette, of whom Deane wrote the Secret Committee of Congress: "Lafayette not thinking that he can obtain leave of his family to pass the seas till he can go as a general officer, I have thought I could not better serve my country than by granting him the rank of major-general."

The man who probably did more for our cause than any one else whom Deane sent from Europe was Baron Steuben, whose coming overbalances many a blunder in commissioning some gay soldier of fortune.

On September 3, 1777, Deane wrote Morris of Steuben, who had visited Paris two months before, with all the weight of twenty years of experience under Frederick the Great, part of the time quartermaster-general and aide-de-camp to the king of Prussia. Steuben carried in his pocket letters from Prince Henry of Prussia, and wished to embark immediately, but finding no opportunity, returned to Germany; urged by his friends he went again to Paris, and although Franklin did not favor the plan, Deane urged the German veteran to go to America without delay. It was at a time when complaints were coming back to Paris of the swarm of French officers, who had



embarrassed more than helped the cause of the insurgents, but Deane recognized the superior worth of Steuben, and recommended him to Congress and to Washington. Deane's judgment was justified. No other officers who came to us did more than Steuben to perfect our army. He was made inspector-general of the army, with the rank of major-general; introduced German tactics, organized the military staff, and trained the troops in the use of the bayonet.

On September 17, 1776, Deane wrote to a French firm that the total silence of his friends in America had well-nigh distracted him, and deranged his whole proceedings; however, he was tired of waiting, and must proceed to order sulphur, saltpetre, and powder. The same day, he wrote to Robert Morris that he should forward in October, clothing for twenty thousand men, thirty thousand fusils, one hundred tons of powder, twenty-four brass mortars, with shells, shot, lead, etc.

On September 30, he explains to Morris his embarrassment in ordering large stores of military supplies without a shilling of money, exclusive of a fund of forty thousand pounds originally intended for other affairs. He writes: "To let slip or to let pass such an opportunity for want of

ready money would be unfortunate, and yet that was taking from a fund before deficient." He adds a little touch which shows the domestic side of his life: "Pray forward the trifles I am sending to my little deserted family as soon as received. God bless and prosper America, is the prayer of every one here, to which I say, Amen and Amen."

Although the Declaration of Independence had been issued in America nearly three months before, there had been no official announcement of the fact to France. On October 1, Deane wrote the Secret Committee that the situation was critical, the ministry uneasy at the absolute silence from America and the bold assertions of the British Ambassador, together with the declaration of a General Hopkins of Maryland, who pretended to be in Deane's secrets, who insisted that the stores would be used against France. This had brought the French to apprehend, not only a settlement between England and America, but the most serious consequences to the French West India Islands should the colonies again unite with Great Britain. He said:

For me, alas, I had nothing left but to make the most positive assertions that no accommodation could or would take place, and to pledge myself in the strongest possible manner that thus would turn out

the event, yet so strong were their apprehensions that an order was issued to suspend furnishing me with stores. Our friend Beaumarchais exerted himself, and in a day or two obtained the orders to be countermanded. For Heaven's sake, if you mean to have any connection with this kingdom, be more assiduous in getting your letters here. It would be too tedious to recount what I have met with. I do not mention a single difficulty with one complaining thought for myself: my all is devoted, and I am happy in being so far successful. The stores are collecting, and I hope will be embarked by the middle of the month. It is consistent with a political letter to urge the remittance of the fourteen thousand hogsheads of tobacco written for formerly, in part payment of these stores: if you make it twenty thousand the public will be gainers.

Evidently Deane did not think of the goods as a present.

A week later, Deane wrote the Committee that the three months' silence after the Declaration of the Fourth of July had given him inexpressible anxiety, and more than once came near frustrating his whole endeavors, for it had been expected in Paris that the next step after the independence would be an appeal for the friendship of France. He again calls for twenty thousand hogsheads of tobacco and suggests that the frigates could discharge their cargo at Bordeaux, and refit there

as cruisers to prey on British commerce and pillage the west coast of England and Scotland.

Through the autumn of 1776, Deane was burdened with incessant anxiety in his endeavors to get the war materials to Havre de Grace and Nantes, and then away. He was overwhelmed by offers from French officers, eager for advanced office and increased pay. He wrote: "Had I ten ships I could fill them all with passengers for America. I am well-nigh harassed with applications of officers. Baron de Kalb, I consider an important acquisition, as are many other officers, whose character I stay not to particularize."

On December 3, he wrote the Committee: "I shipped forty thousand tons of saltpetre, two hundred thousand pounds of powder via Martinique, and one hundred barrels via Amsterdam." By the same mail he wrote John Jay that the Declaration of Independence had been presented in Court, and it was well received.

Thomas Morris, the wayward brother of Robert, added much to the care and worry of Deane. Thomas was in London, and his able and powerful brother, Robert, anxious to help him in his career, had given him a financial position in London under the supervision of Deane. Writing to Robert Morris, December 4, 1777, Deane says:

I am afraid, from good advices from London, that pleasure has got too strong a hold on him. On his arrival in London, a respectable friend wrote me that the company he dipped at once into was so dissolute and expensive that it very essentially injured the reputation of your house.

On October 23, a letter came from Robert Morris urging Deane to be attentive to Thomas and spur him up to diligent, honest, and faithful discharge of duty. By the same mail there came a letter from the Committee announcing that Thomas Jefferson had declined to go to France, and Arthur Lee of London had been appointed to serve with Deane and Franklin as commissioner. It is interesting to imagine what would have been Deane's later life, if Jefferson had accepted the office of commissioner, and Arthur Lee had been allowed to spend his virulence on some one else.

The gloom of approaching disaster and ruin began to gather about Deane when in December, 1777, Arthur Lee crossed the British Channel and took lodgings in Paris.

Before we pass to the consideration of Deane's work in conjunction with Franklin and Lee, we glance at the work accomplished in the five months during which he had served alone. By the first of December, eight ships were ready to sail with

the supplies, which were indispensable for the campaign which culminated in the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga, and all, except the *Flamand*, were got to sea in January and February, 1777; the *Flamand* sailed in September. These vessels carried eight thousand seven hundred and fifty pairs of shoes, three thousand six hundred blankets, more than four thousand dozen pairs of stockings, one hundred and sixty-four brass cannon, one hundred and fifty-three carriages, more than forty-one thousand balls, thirty-seven thousand fusils, three hundred and seventy-three thousand flints, fifteen thousand gun worms, five hundred and fourteen thousand musket balls, nearly twenty thousand pounds of lead, nearly one hundred and sixty-one thousand pounds of powder, twenty-one mortars, more than three thousand bombs, more than eleven thousand grenades, three hundred and forty-five grapeshot, eighteen thousand spades, shovels, and axes, over four thousand tents, and fifty-one thousand pounds of sulphur.

The *Amphitrite* and *Mercure*, on board of which were more than eighteen thousand stands of arms complete, and fifty-two pieces of brass cannon, with powder and tents and clothing, reached Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the spring in season for the campaign of 1777. It is impossible

to exaggerate the importance of those supplies in the battles which culminated in the fall of Burgoyne, who was sweeping down powerfully from Canada to New York with the purpose of separating the northern from the southern colonies. It was a time of general alarm throughout the country. The governor's Horse Guard of Connecticut was summoned. Every nerve was strained to stay the advance of Burgoyne. The military supplies, furnished by Vergennes and forwarded by Beaumarchais and Deane, landed at Portsmouth and carried overland to the Hudson, figured largely in the splendid victory, which gave new courage and hope to the American cause, and soon led to the French recognition of the new republic.

It were unfortunate if our story of Coudray and De Broglie has created the impression that all the volunteers who came from beyond the sea were failures; Lafayette, De Kalb, Steuben, and Pulaski came early, and others who came later who did valiant service.

On the whole, the choice of Deane as commissioner to forward military supplies was justified by the results.



## CHAPTER VII

### FRANKLIN AND LEE JOIN DEANE IN PARIS

THE task of Deane was that of agent of the Secret Committee of Congress in search of help for the struggling colonists. He had no official position, but after the Declaration of Independence was issued, it was decided to appoint three Commissioners, and Franklin, Jefferson, and Deane were chosen; Jefferson declined, and Arthur Lee was appointed in his place.

There never has been any question about the wisdom of the choice of Franklin.

Philosophic, literary, and political ferment prepared the French people to sympathize with the American insurgents. Scientific activity was vigorous in France in the eighteenth century. "More new truths," says Buckle, "concerning the external world were discovered in France during the latter part of the eighteenth century than during all the previous periods put together." Lecture rooms of professors of chemistry, anatomy, and physics were almost as crowded as theatres, and



when Franklin appeared in Paris heralded by his fame in electricity, and put the first lightning-rod in France upon his dwelling in Passy, the genial philosopher received a royal welcome.

Wearied with the artificial modes of life, the French were delighted with the naturalness of the Americans, and when Franklin appeared with his provincial dress and benignant face, he excited a widespread interest which rose to enthusiasm. The feeling of the English was different. Some claimed he had abandoned his country in her ruin. "I have just seen," writes Franklin, "seven paragraphs in the English papers about me, six were lies." Stormont, the British Ambassador to France, wrote: "It is generally believed here that he comes in the double capacity of a negotiator and a fugitive. He will lie, he will promise, and he will flatter, with all the insincerity and subtlety that are natural to him." Deane wrote: "His arrival is the common topic for conversation, and has given birth to a thousand conjectures."

No one else could have been selected so admirably adapted to the task that needed doing. The story of the kite, the new world of electrical knowledge and power just opening; his reputation as a philosopher and a wise man, his simple dress, shrewd conversation, keen criticism, and inde-

pendent judgment attracted the admiration of a people, tired of an effete civilization.

The Comte de Segur says:

It would be difficult to describe the eagerness and delight with which these agents of a people in a state of insurrection against their monarch were received in France, in the bosom of an ancient monarchy. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the luxury of our capital, the elegance of our fashions, the magnificence of Versailles, the still brilliant remains of the monarchical pride of Louis, and the polished and superb dignity of our nobility. . . and the almost rustic apparel, the unpowdered hair, the plain but firm demeanor, the free and direct language of the envoys; whose antique simplicity of dress and appearance seemed to have introduced within our walls, in the midst of the effeminate and servile refinement of the eighteenth century, sages contemporary with Plato, or republicans of the age of Cato and of Fabius. This unexpected spectacle produced upon us a greater effect in consequence of its novelty, and because it occurred precisely at the period when literature and philosophy had spread amongst us all an unusual desire for reforms, a disposition to encourage innovations, and the seeds of an ardent attachment to liberty.

Parton writes:

Men imagined they saw in Franklin a sage of antiquity come back to give austere lessons and generous examples to the moderns. They personified in him

the Republic of which he was the representative and the legislator. They regarded his virtues as those of his countrymen, and even judged of their physiognomy by the imposing and serene traits of his own.

The French police gave him abundant advertisement:

Dr. Franklin [says a sketch of the time] is very much run after, and fêted, not only by the savants, his confrères, but by all the people who can get hold of him. This Quaker wears the full costume of his sect. He has an agreeable physiognomy, spectacles always on his eyes; but little hair,—a fur cap is always on his head. He wears no powder, but has a neat air, linen very white, and a brown coat.

When he reached Paris on Dec. 3, 1776, he took lodgings at first at the center of the city in the Hôtel de Hamburg, but he soon accepted the invitation of Le Ray de Chaumont, a wealthy and ardent friend of America, to take up his abode in a more retired place in Passy, half a mile beyond the outskirts of Paris. There for nine years Dr. Franklin lived.

That house is still in existence, and it has on its façade an inscription which informs the public that it was the home of Franklin.

That house became the center of a cordial and extensive hospitality. Americans were there, whether friendly or unfriendly. There Franklin

tried to make Deane and Lee forget their animosities. There was entertained Ralph Izard, a man of the same stripe as Arthur Lee, sent over as envoy to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, but preferring to live in Paris in idleness; whose laziness and meanness at length wore out the patience of the gentle Franklin, who closed his house to a man so unprincipled and virulent.

John Adams says:

Franklin's reputation was more universal than that of Leibnitz or Newton, Frederick or Voltaire; and his character more esteemed than any or all of them. . . . His name was familiar to government and people, to kings, courtiers, nobility, clergy, and philosophers, as well as plebeians, to such a degree that there was scarcely a peasant or a citizen, a valet-de-chambre, coachman, or footman, a lady's chamber-maid, or a scullion in the kitchen, who was not familiar with it, or who did not consider him as a friend to humankind. If a collection could be made of all the Gazettes of Europe for the latter part of the eighteenth century, a greater number of panegyrical paragraphs upon "le grande Franklin" would appear, it is believed, than upon any other man who ever lived.

Medallions, busts, medals of every size and style appeared. Franklin wrote his daughter:

A variety of impressions has been made of different sizes: some large enough to be set in the lids of snuff-boxes; some so small as to be worn in rings; and the

number sold is incredible. These, with the pictures, busts, and printings (of which copies upon copies are spread everywhere), have made your father's face as well known as that of the moon.

Franklin and Deane were together at Passy, on friendliest terms, and soon Lee came over from England and took lodgings in another part of the city, scornful of the French, eager to push forward his own interests, bent on mischief.

Arthur Lee had two brothers in Congress, one of whom was Richard Henry Lee, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Arthur Lee was born Dec. 20, 1740, three years after Deane. His early education was finished at Eton in England, whence he went to Edinburgh to prepare for the medical profession. After taking his degree, he traveled in Holland and Germany, and then returned to Virginia to practice. Not satisfied with the medical profession he went to London and began to study law at the Temple, about the year 1766.

Sparks is our authority for the statement that Lee was hostile to Franklin from an early date, and while he did not secure his downfall as he did that of Deane, he did his best to compass it.

While Franklin was agent for Massachusetts at the Court of London, Arthur Lee was nominated

to be his successor when he should retire. Circumstances detained the philosopher longer in England than was expected, and Lee grew impatient, and fearing, as he said, that Franklin would never depart until he was gathered to his fathers, resorted to the dishonorable artifice of writing letters to one of the principal men of the Massachusetts legislature, filled with charges against him regarding his official conduct, charges as destitute of foundation as of candor and propriety.

In October, 1777, Lee wrote to his brothers and to Samuel Adams that foreign affairs were in confusion, and that he would "prefer being at the Court of France, the great wheel by which all the other wheels are moved," and he recommended that Franklin be sent to Vienna and Deane to Holland.

At one time, he intimated that Franklin had sent out a public vessel on a "crusing job," in the profits of which he was to share; at another time, he said that Franklin and an American banker in Paris were in league with each other to defraud the public and put money into their own pockets.

Deane had some dealings with Lee before the latter was appointed Commissioner, and in a way

which did not commend the Virginian to the Yankee. In the summer of 1776, Deane wrote:

I received a letter from Arthur Lee, then at London, desiring me to inform Congress that Joseph Reed and John Langdon were dangerous persons, and to put Congress on guard. Stranger as I was to Arthur Lee's character, his letter greatly surprised me, the more so as he wrote in the most positive terms, without giving me the reasons for the charge. I replied that I could by no means comply with his request, that I had long been personally acquainted with the gentlemen, and had the fullest confidence in their integrity and zeal for America, therefore I could not think of transmitting such information without proof; that I knew they held important posts in Congress, therefore, if the charge could be supported, no time should be lost in transmitting evidence, but I trembled at the thought of giving Congress suspicions of its most confidential servants without certain proof; the consequences must be pernicious to the public and fatal to the individual.

Some time afterward Lee visited Paris, and Deane urged him to give him the grounds for his letter concerning Reed and Langdon. Lee said that as for Reed he really knew nothing more than that he formerly corresponded with Lord Dartmouth, and Reed's brother-in-law had an interview with his lordship. But as for Langdon he had no doubt about his disloyalty, as he had spent the last winter in London and was frequently with



the Ministry. Deane replied that as to the latter he had spent the last winter in Philadelphia, and as to the former he did not think such vague and inconclusive circumstances were sufficient to authorize the sending general charges to Congress; that charges of such a complexion, and coming from such a person as himself, must forever damn the reputation of those accused, and alarm and embarrass the public. To this Lee replied that he knew that a person named Langdon had been in London the last winter, and therefore he wrote, supposing him to be John Langdon of Portsmouth; that he believed he was too suspicious at times, and was glad Deane had not sent forward the letter.

When the three Commissioners had gotten settled, they called on Vergennes, who assured them of his friendliness so far as the treaty obligations with England would permit. He criticized Beaumarchais for letting Deane have the supplies and seemed to blame the imaginary firm, Roderique, Hortalez & Co., and Franklin and Lee determined to let Deane engineer the business end of their commission.

It was a trying time, the *Amphitrite* had returned to port because of head-winds and lack of fresh meat for the gallant Coudray. Deane found



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Beaumarchais ill in bed with fatigue and vexation. "I never had been," writes Deane, "in so critical and distressed a situation. All the difficulties before were as nothing." The stores of thirty thousand stands of arms, near two hundred and fifty pieces of brass artillery, clothing and powder, were ready at the ports; ships were ready at expense; accounts of the critical situation of the armies in America, their misfortunes, distress, and want of supplies, together with the coolness and reserve of the Minister, almost put Deane into desperation. Something must be done; Deane saw that his only hope was through Beaumarchais and he assured him that, however decided the opposition of the city and the Court, there must be no desertion of the cause, and the business of securing supplies for the American army must not fall through; between Beaumarchais and Deane, the *Amphitrite* was cleared as for the West Indies, with instructions to the captain to head for Portsmouth, and he arrived there in April just as the troops were taking the field.

It was difficult and expensive to get the stores to the seaports; some of the cannon were drawn two hundred miles; British agents were everywhere on the watch; the moment war supplies began to move, remonstrance and counter orders

sprang up. Deane carried the burden of buying and forwarding supplies, a task for which he was better qualified than for politics. Franklin was past seventy when he went to Paris, and he had neither experience nor taste for business and accounts, and he was quite willing that younger men should attend to details. Lee was away from Paris much of the time, in Spain, Holland, and Berlin, vainly seeking help; when he was in Paris Deane talked over the contracts with him as he always did with Franklin, but affairs ran more smoothly with the Commissioners when Lee was out of town. Here is a sample of his mental breadth and good sense: Deane was negotiating with a French contractor, a M. Holker, for several thousand suits of clothes for the army, and after talking it over together they decided that it would be wise, for the severe climate of America, to make the coats longer than usual, in order to lap over the trousers for the better protection of the men; it was argued that the expense would be slight as it would require only one sixth more cloth and four extra buttons, but when Deane and Holker talked it over with Lee, the latter objected on the ground of expense; so strenuous was the opposition, that Holker generously offered to bear the extra cost himself, when Lee

answered that he had another objection, that it would increase the weight of the coat and thus fatigue the soldier! It is not strange that after that the French contractors declined to discuss their contracts with Lee.

The autumn of 1776 was discouraging: Burgoyne was on his way toward Albany to cut the eastern colonies off from the southern; Gen. Howe was pushing on toward Philadelphia, and the American forces were retreating; the French Ministry was wary; sometimes the French assurances of help were scanty. Deane went to Fontainebleau with a fixed resolution, when the fortunes of the Continental army were ebbing and credit almost gone. The appearance of the persistent Yankee Commissioner gave the Ministry decided uneasiness, for powerful English officers were on the watch, and the future of the American cause was cloudy. They asked Deane to wait till they heard from Spain; he knew it was an excuse to hear from America; the last news from the seat of war was discouraging, the next might mean ruin for the insurgents; but notwithstanding the hostile looks, Deane declared his determination to remain there until he obtained a positive answer to his request for money. He insisted on a short interview with Vergennes, he

was informed that the courier had not returned from Spain, and it was desired that he should retire from Fontainebleau, where the person and business of any stranger, especially an American Commissioner, could not escape observation.

Deane replied that it was within the power of the Minister to free himself from any uneasiness on his account by granting his request, and probably of all future solicitude concerning America by the absolute refusal of it, but that he could not think of returning to Paris without an explicit answer.

As we look at the situation, the stand which Deane took was indispensable, for while the French treasury was impoverished, the state of affairs in America was desperate; even Franklin advised stopping the execution of the contract, and selling the goods on hand, to pay the pressing debts which the Commissioners had contracted.

Deane's earnest and convincing plea was successful, he was told that three million livres would be furnished Grand, our banker, on our account in quarterly payments the next year, and perhaps something from Spain.

This did not clear the debt; the cost of supplies had been so large, the prize money so trifling, the expense of refitting so great, the money spent on released prisoners so considerable; but it

enabled the Commissioners to go on with the contracts for supplies, though news of the defeat at Brandywine and the progress of Burgoyne in Canada deepened their anxiety.

It is not strange that Vergennes should have been so cautious; the evacuation of Ticonteroga and Crown Point laid the road to our frontier open, without a fort or redoubt to impede. After the affair at Brandywine, the two capital cities of New York and Philadelphia were practically in the hands of the British, as were also the town and harbor of Newport; a victorious army at Albany threatened to separate New England from the other colonies; British superiority at sea threatened to destroy our commerce, and if England should declare war on France the prospects of the colonists were forlorn enough. In after years Deane said that he had ceased to criticize the French Ministry for its lack of zeal in our time of distress.

September, October, and November, 1777, passed. The general opinion in France was that the Americans would be obliged to submit. The Commissioners were anxious to have France declare for America, believing that such declaration would close the war, but no word came from the Court.

The Commissioners and the French Ministry had

no communication by writing even, except by petitions and requests to which a verbal answer was sometimes given, but more commonly there was no answer; the French authorities at Nantes restored prize ships to English owners; when the *Amphitrite* returned from America, her captain was imprisoned for carrying supplies to the insurgents.

In December, the whole situation changed when J. L. Austin arrived from Boston with the reviving and important news of the surrender of General Burgoyne. "A sovereign cordial to the dying," it roused and reanimated the friends of America in every part of Europe.

During all this dreary period, the trials of the Commissioners were increased by the suspicious and uneasy disposition of Arthur Lee. Deane writes: "From the first Mr. Lee gave Dr. Franklin and me much trouble which was constantly increasing; and the dissatisfaction with and contempt for the French nation in general, which he took no pains to conceal, often gave us pain, and rendered himself suspected by many."

The report of Burgoyne's defeat was followed by interviews between the Commissioners and the French Ministry concerning a treaty. In that time of strain, so violent and irrational was the

disposition of Lee, that Franklin was of the opinion that his head was affected. After much discussion the treaty was signed at Passy on Feb. 6, 1778, with the understanding that for the present it should be kept a secret.

On the night of the day the treaties were signed, Deane noted that Lee's private secretary started hastily for England, and in a day or two Fox spoke in Parliament of the treaty as signed. Lee's responsibility for this has been declared unproven by a writer of some standing, and Durand, in his *New Materials on the American War*, says that Lee's correspondence with Congress is a series of injurious insinuations, implying that Franklin was little better than a robber, while alliance between France and the United States was due to him alone. More than that, for since De Lomenie examined the documents in the French Archives, records have been unearthed which go to show that Lee was substantially a traitor. The moment he was told that Louis XVI had accepted the treaty of commerce and friendship with the United States, and when he was about to sign it with Franklin and Deane, Lee wrote Shelburne and advised him that "if England wanted to prevent closer ties between France and the United States she must not delay." M.



Doniel states that Lee was in the pay of the party opposed to Lord North. We have no reason to question the honesty or accuracy of these men, who have examined the full records in Paris, but Arthur Lee has enough to answer for without the charge of traitor.

Thus was effected the second important object which the Commissioners had in view. Needed supplies had been secured, and nearly all had been shipped, and all save a part of one cargo reached Portsmouth in safety, and now treaties of friendship and commerce had been signed.

Deane determined to devote his attention to the task of securing a loan from Holland; he had been in correspondence with men of rank there, and had been assured of assistance of men of standing in France; the business of buying and forwarding supplies had been conducted so covertly, and in so many places, that two or three months would be consumed in collecting the accounts, and Deane planned spending that time in Holland, but on March 4, he received a letter from Lovell with the order of Congress of Dec. 8, 1777, requesting him to return to America to report to Congress on the condition of affairs in Europe.

Knowing what he did of the mischievous and underhanded activity of Lee, the active mind



and not too sanguine temper of Deane may have given him some uneasiness at the peremptory summons.

He had long been under a heavy strain; in addition to the financial and political demands made upon him, a great bereavement had come into his home, of which we are reminded in the following letter to C. W. F. Dumas, written Oct. 1, 1777:

I feel myself sensibly affected on receiving your kind and friendly condolence on my misfortune; though the situation of my country is sufficient to engross my whole attention, yet the loss I have met with is not less heavy on my spirits, nor does it fall the lighter on me for coming attended with public misfortunes and distresses.

The explanation of this sorrowful letter is found in the following item from the *Connecticut Gazette* of New London of June 27, 1777.

"Died at Wethersfield, after a long indisposition, Mrs. Elizabeth Deane, Consort of Silas Deane, Esquire, now in France, and daughter of Gurdon Saltonstall of this town."

As Deane turned his face homeward after two years' absence, he must have felt a deep sense of satisfaction with the work accomplished, which no doubt went far to relieve the shadow which was approaching.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RECALL

WE have seen how the anxious summer and autumn of 1777 were followed by the good news that Burgoyne had surrendered.

On Oct. 31, at ten in the morning, the brigantine *Perch* sailed from Long Wharf in Boston, carrying J. L. Austin of that city with messages from the Massachusetts Council announcing the surrender at Saratoga and the capture of six thousand men.

It was the first great victory for America, and is reckoned by Creasy as worthy of a place among the fifteen decisive battles of the world.

The winds and tides sped the happy vessel, and in thirty days she reached the French coast. On Nov. 30, Austin announced the news in France.

Leaving Nantes in a chaise, drawn by three horses abreast, he hastened to Versailles, and thence to Passy. As he drove into the courtyard he was met by Franklin who asked, "Sir, is Philadelphia taken?" "It is," was the reply, "but, Sir,

I have greater news than that: General Burgoyne and his whole army are prisoners."

Beaumarchais was then visiting the Commissioners at Passy, and he started for Paris with such eagerness to carry the news that the carriage tipped over and he nearly broke his neck. But the casualty did not weaken his joy. "My right arm is cut," he said, "the bones of my neck are nearly crushed, but the charming news from America is a balm to my wounds."

Paul Jones, commander of the *Ranger*, and founder of the American navy, had a part in the celebration. On arriving in Nantes this brave corsair found himself one of the officers of a recognized Republic and hearing from the French Admiral that his salute would be returned, a little after sunset the *Ranger* discharged thirteen guns in honor of the French Administration, and in reply nine guns saluted the flag of the United States.

On hearing the news, Vergennes was as impatient to close the treaty as he had previously been reluctant, saying: "The power which first recognizes American independence will gather all the fruits of the war. France must anticipate such action on England's part by greater speed in making the colonists our friends."

A ship was soon on its way to carry the joyous news that Louis had decided to recognize the new Republic. The Commissioners wrote that the news of the surrender of Burgoyne had called forth universal joy in France, as if it had been a victory of their own troops, as it was a victory won by arms from its arsenals.

While the vessel was bearing the welcome news to America, another passed over to France, bearing a very different message for one of the Commissioners, the man who had represented his country there the longest, whose fidelity, energy, and success were unquestioned.

At last the succession of underhanded and disparaging letters of Arthur Lee bore fruit, and Deane must turn from a life of incessant toil and care to years of exhausting and shameful facing a fogbank of malice and lies.

When Deane learned of the action of Congress he consulted Franklin, who said that, notwithstanding the unsettled state of the accounts, it would be best for him to go at once, that his stay in America would not be for any length of time, and he would be back for the final settlement.

Deane then waited on Vergennes and told him of the recall: he found him friendly, and willing to do anything in his power; he offered the use of a

frigate, or even of a ship of the line to be put into instant readiness to carry Deane to America, and said affairs would not probably suffer in his absence.

Deane, finding it a favorable opportunity, took occasion to urge an immediate declaration of the treaties to the Court of London, and the sending out of a strong squadron, then nearly ready at Toulon.

After several interviews on the subject the measure was adopted; Deane agreed that the affair should be a secret on his part except to Franklin and Dr. Bancroft; the fleet was ordered to go direct to Delaware Bay, and it carried four skillful captains, who were familiar with the coast of the United States.

On March 16, Stormont left Paris for London, and on March 20, the American Commissioners were formally presented to Louis XVI by Vergennes. It was not as brilliant as some other ceremonies which have occurred at Versailles, but it was most gratifying to Franklin, Deane, and Lee. Franklin was less affected by the splendid decorations of the palace than he was by the fact that it was ill-kept, and sweeping and other sanitary provisions neglected.

After the reception, the Commissioners called

to pay their respects to Madame de Lafayette, who was at Versailles, and to assure her of the gratitude of America for her husband's efforts. Then they dined with Vergennes.

On the night of March 31, Deane started for the coast, having obtained from Grand an account of all the moneys received or paid on the public account, which he carried with him, and duplicates were given to Franklin and Lee, and with the former he left the public papers and an explanation of the accounts. It was all he could do in the little time at his disposal. The greater part of the accounts being unsettled, no general account could be made; moreover, the order for the recall and Lovell's letter, which contained all the information Deane had concerning the motives for the recall, gave him to understand that all that was desired of him was information on the state of affairs in Europe.

I by no means concluded [he wrote later] that I was so suddenly called upon to render in an exact state of an account which demanded necessarily a much longer time to complete than was allowed me by the terms of the recall; nor, in addition to this, could I possibly conceive that the nature of the recall was such as to require of me individually an account of the joint transactions in money matters of myself and colleagues. I fell in with M. Gérard on my way

to Toulon, and we embarked, happy at the great prospects before us.

How mistaken Deane was in his bright hopes will appear in our next chapter, but here is the place to describe the events which led to the recall.

We have seen that the origin of active French participation in our struggle was in the conversations of Arthur Lee and Beaumarchais, in the glowing language and large assurance of both of those ardent and imaginative men. When Lee learned that Deane had been appointed rather than himself to carry those brilliant dreams into reality, he was bitterly disappointed, and he set at work, with more or less deliberation, to ruin Deane and secure his recall.

He visited Deane; he tried to get Deane into trouble in the matter of Reed and Langdon; he burdened the mails with messages to his friends in Virginia and Philadelphia; he filled the mind of every man in Congress he could influence with suspicions toward his colleague. He did not limit his attack to Deane, but described Franklin as indolent, incapable, and selfish.

Lee wrote of Franklin:

His abilities are great and reputation high, removed

as he is to so considerable a distance from the observation of his constituents. If he is not guided by principles of virtue and honor, these abilities and that reputation may produce the most mischievous effects. On my conscience I believe him to be under no such internal restraint.

Some of his work must have been more skillfully done than that. Gérard saw his insincerity and meanness. In a letter to Vergennes of Sept. 27, 1779, Gérard characterized the statements of Lee as "an absurd tissue of lies and sarcasms, which can do nothing but compromise those who have the misfortune to be in correspondence with him."

We are not to think of Lee as lacking in patriotism and devotion; the implications of Deane and Beaumarchais, that he was willing to play into the hands of the English, we would rather regard as unproven, though there are suspicious facts which injure him if they do not convict; but there is no question about his persistent and venomous endeavor to undermine Deane. Lee was a man of sanguine temperament, with the fire and vehemence of a Southerner; credulous, hasty, impetuous, he allowed his conduct to be shaped by a mind corroded by suspicion, jealousy, and distrust. He described himself clearly when he told Deane that he was too apt to yield to suspicions.



He said: "Unhappily my fate has thrown me into public life, and the impatience of my nature makes me embark in it with an impetuosity and imprudence which increase the evils to which it is necessarily subject."

Lee was a man of wide scholarship; his opportunities for education were of the highest order in England and Scotland. While a student he had formed friendships with such men as Burke, Glynn, and Sir William Jones; he was fearless, industrious, and tireless in the pursuit of his object. He was not averse to storm and struggle in pursuing his aims. Alert, energetic, remorseless, everything must be sacrificed to achieve his ambitions.

Deane was by nature more formal, cold, perhaps a little haughty, and when he came in contact with the enthusiastic, ambitious, acrimonious Lee there was no love lost on either side. Deane had the Secret Committee behind him, and the pedestal of a high office, in which he had been placed, beneath his feet, and he did not hesitate to let Lee know that he must occupy a lower position. Five months of stiff service in Paris by himself, of necessity, gave Deane a purchase which he was not slow to make the most of, and this gave little joy to Lee who wanted that central office.

It is perhaps not quite fair to lay upon Lee all the blame for the altercations which for years disturbed the peace of Congress, and brought such agony upon Deane. The conditions in which they were placed; the two men were so unlike each other; their aims so antagonistic, that nothing less than an angelic visitation or a daily miracle could have averted quarrels. From the temper of letters written and words uttered it appears that the angels meddled as little as did Franklin.

The first trace of open difficulty, appears in a letter from Deane to Vergennes, Aug. 22, 1776, from which we quote: "I was this morning informed of the arrival of Mr. Arthur Lee, and that he would be in Paris to-morrow. This was surprising to me as I knew of no particular affair that might bring him here."

Four weeks later Lee was back in London, and three months later he returned to Paris as one of the three Commissioners. The first seeds of discord were planted, a condition which led Congress by a large majority to put upon its journals a resolve, "that suspicions and animosities have arisen among the late and present Commissioners, highly prejudicial to the honor and interest of the United States."

When Franklin and Lee joined Deane, there

were peculiar difficulties in the way of forwarding supplies to America, as we have seen in the last chapter: Franklin had no experience in commercial matters, and Lee had neither experience nor sympathy with Deane, who was not unwilling to shoulder responsibility and complete the work which he had so well begun.

Moreover, it seemed best that Lee should go to other countries in the interest of the insurgents. Lee was consulted about the contracts when possible, but it was not fair for Lee to harass the ears of Congress with clandestine complaints about Deane because he did not give him a voice in the contracts with Beaumarchais for supplies, Holker for clothing, and Montheu for ships, at a time when Deane was straining every nerve to get cannon from Strassburg, muskets, fusils, powder, and shot from magazines in the interior to Bordeaux, Havre, Dunkirk, and Nantes.

It was a difficult achievement to complete the task at all, in view of the repeated delays and interpositions of the French Government, the hostility and complaints of the English officers, and the scarcity of money; one is tempted to use strong words to characterize Lee for criticizing Deane to members of Congress in the bitterest and most unsparing terms, because of his unbusinesslike

methods, and the confusion of the accounts, which of necessity attended affairs which had to be conducted with stealth and concealment.

Another element in Lee's discontent seems to have been the fact that, when he returned from Prussia, he found that Deane was so acceptable at Versailles, was so well received by the Ministers, was so highly esteemed among other men of eminence, was in such correspondence with influential men near and far, that he was wielding great power, and likely to exert still larger influence, while Lee was comparatively unknown.

A man of Lee's disposition, who considered himself as one of the prime movers in the Revolution, did not enjoy the situation: and it is barely possible that Deane did not apply any balm to the wounded ambition of his unhappy colleague.

Then came the adventure of Lee's mind in a field in which he was an expert. How much sincerity there was in his work of studied and persistent defamation we cannot say. It is charitable to believe that he so brooded over the situation, so fed his diseased imagination, so nursed his wounded and disappointed feelings, that he came to view himself as a martyr, and Deane and his friends as his deadly enemies.

Perhaps he really believed that Beaumarchais and Deane were making vast sums of money at the expense of the public. The plots and stratagems in his own unwholesome mind may have made it possible for him to believe that selfish deliriums controlled the Yankee Commissioner.

He seems to have believed that a combination was writing paragraphs to his discredit, and procuring their insertion in European Gazettes; also writing letters to men of influence in America, and that the head of this powerful conspiracy was Deane.

In such a state of mind, this victim of delusion or malice, or both, began to write to friends in America about Deane. Lee had two brothers in Congress; one of them, R. H. Lee, was a man of decided weight; the Adamses from Massachusetts were warm friends of the Lees, and before long these and others, like Laurens, Duer, Tom Paine, and Izard, were hard on the track of the doomed man.

The following are extracts from Arthur Lee's letters to his brother, R. H. Lee, dated nine days after the treaty was signed:

My absence and the care with which things have been concealed from me have disqualified me to judge of the truth of the suspicions, which are general, of

Deane's having had douceurs from the public contractors and others in order to conciliate his patronage; and that he is in a sort of partnership with Holker, Sabatier, Montheu, and others, in which the public money and influence are made subservient to private profit.

Again:

Whenever he is removed from the control of money, the truth will come out fast enough, and the persons who, under his auspices, have been defrauding the public, may be brought to account. Upon the whole, these are dangerous men, and capable of any wickedness to avenge themselves on those who are suspected of counteracting their purposes. The calling to account for money we have expended, the taking of the expenditure out of their hands for the future, or the removal of him who has misapplied it, would lead to discovery and proofs before time has enabled him to prevent them.

Can anything be more unfair than such an attack upon a colleague concerning matters, of whose details the accuser did not even profess to have any accurate knowledge? How could such insinuations do other than create prejudice and affix a stigma? If Lee believed these charges to be well grounded, it was his duty to discover the proofs; and it certainly was his duty to keep his suspicions to himself until he could issue them with the facts to support them.

Furthermore, simple decency demanded that he should present the accusations first of all to Deane himself, that he might have an opportunity, if possible, to explain them.

A charge on mere suspicion is a calumny, and it is hard to find language strong enough to condemn the criminality of a man who is in daily intercourse with a colleague, in an office which implies mutual confidence and responsibility, and at the same time is doing all he can to destroy his influence and break down his reputation among the men, three thousand miles away, who were responsible for keeping him in office, and who had no opportunity to sift the facts and learn the evidence.

Lee wrote to several men with greater latitude of censure than the extracts we have given; these letters were shown to others, and the effect could not be other than in the highest degree injurious.

So strong and malicious was Lee's slander of Franklin that, but for the influence of Gérard, it is probable he too would have been unseated.

Deane's fate was fixed by a selfishness, a cruelty, an avarice which the unfortunate object of Lee's meanness did not understand, until he had vainly and for years struggled and fought.

Every breeze that wafted his vessel homeward

bore him nearer a nest of serpents, which the cunning and unprincipled Lee was industriously hatching. Those who were not convinced that Deane was in the wrong, would have their confidence shaken by the bold insinuations of a man so able, so well-posted, and so competent to understand the whole situation as Lee. Men of caution and good judgment would find it easy to suspect Deane on the repeated declarations of a colleague who unblushingly linked his name with the names of three eminent French merchants as men in league to defraud the government.

This is the underside of the story of Deane's recall. Deane suspected that Lee was working against him, but he felt a certain security in the fact that he possessed the confidence of Franklin, who was, as he said, his "guide, philosopher, and friend."

Deane carried with him a letter from Franklin to the president of Congress, dated March 31, 1778, as follows:

My colleague, Mr. Deane, being recalled by Congress, and no reasons given that yet appeared here, it is apprehended to be the effect of some misrepresentations from an enemy or two at Paris and at Nantes. I have no doubt that he will be able clearly to justify himself; but having lived intimately with him more



than fifteen months, the greatest part of the time in the same house, and a constant witness of his public conduct, I cannot avoid giving this testimony, though unasked, that I esteem him a faithful, active, and able minister, who to my knowledge has done in various ways great and important services to his country, whose interests I wish may always by every one in her employ be as much and as efficiently promoted.

The opinion of Beaumarchais is to the same effect. In a secret memoir for the ministers of the king he wrote:

By character and by ambition Mr. Arthur Lee was first jealous of Mr. Deane. He finished by becoming his enemy, which always happens to small minds, more occupied in supplanting their rivals than in surpassing them in merit.

The connections of Mr. Lee in England, and two brothers whom he has in Congress, have made him recently an important and dangerous man.

His plan has always been to prefer between France and England the power which would most surely bring him to fortune. England has some advantages for him. He has often explained himself on the subject in his libertine suppers. But to succeed, it was necessary to get rid of a colleague so formidable by his patriotism as Mr. Deane. This he has accomplished by causing him to be suspected in several points of view by Congress. Having learned that the American army regarded the foreign military officers with displeasure, he threw poison into the zeal of his associate who sent them. At the same time, the

conduct of some Frenchmen, who escaped from our Islands, justifying perhaps the repugnance they felt for our officers in America, Mr. Lee profited by these dispositions to affirm to Congress that Mr. Deane had, on his own motion, and against good advice, sent these officers, who were as expensive as useless to the Republic.

A second motive for the recall is the officious care Mr. Lee has taken to write incessantly to Congress, that all that the house of Hortalez had sent, whether of merchandise or munitions of war, were a present from France to America, that he had been told so by Mr. Hortalez himself.

Nothing was easier than for the politic Mr. Lee to envenom the conduct of Mr. Deane by giving it more the effect of secret menaces tending to favor certain demands for money, of which he afterwards received a share of the profits; all of which explains very clearly the astonishing silence that Congress has kept upon more than ten of my letters which were full of detail. This silence is what has determined me to send an honest and discreet man who can penetrate the foundation of this intrigue.

To-day Mr. Deane, loaded with grief, finds himself suddenly and harshly recalled. He is ordered to go to give an account of his conduct and to justify himself from many faults which they do not designate.

He had resolved in his resentment not to go until Congress had sent him the charges, not wishing, as he said, to go to deliver himself into the hands of his personal enemies, without carrying with him justifications which would confound them, but I induced him to change his determination.

After explaining his conviction that Arthur Lee was a "lance with two heads," and, through his brother William, was playing into the hands of the English, Beaumarchais assured Deane that his vindication was assured.

Your justification [he said] is in my portfolio. Lee accuses you of having on your authority sent officers to America, and I have in my hands a letter in cypher for the politic Lee, who presses me warmly to send engineers and officers to the aid of America, and that letter was written before your arrival in France. Mr. Lee pretends to have received from me the assurance that all my consignments were presents from France, and that all the rest is a romance of your cupidity; but in the same portfolio I have the bargain in cypher between Lee and myself, which proves that correspondences were established by this very Lee, on the basis of an active and recipient trade, and not otherwise.

Then you did not imagine on your own motion that America had need of officers. Upon your arrival in France, by following errors begun by Lee, you cannot be guilty in the eyes of Congress for having regarded as an honorable commerce what was established under that form.

Beaumarchais says that he persuaded Deane to brave the storm, confident that his honest and patriotic character would be established and his enemies be put to shame.

This friendly and ardent Frenchman also wrote

to Congress a letter which is dated March 23, 1778, and after explaining the origin of his work for the United States, he says that he wrote Lee in London of his project of forming a fictitious business house called Roderique, Hortalez & Co. to send military supplies, and Lee made no reply to his letter, and just then Deane appeared on the scene.

From the moment of his arrival [writes Beaumarchais] I corresponded with no one else, and it is in consequence of our mutual efforts, his powers which he communicated to me, the details with which he furnished me, and the specific demands he made for supplies and munitions of war, besides his repeated promises that you would meet our shipments with prompt returns, that I prevailed upon my friends to entrust me with sufficient funds. He alone has overcome difficulties on every hand; and without the reliance that we have placed on his promises, I should never, very likely, have succeeded in realizing this enterprise, which before his arrival was a doubtful and undeveloped plan.

Although the returns pledged by him have not arrived within the time fixed, we have not indulged in reproaches, observing that he was even more distressed than we ourselves. I venture to assure you, Gentlemen, that had he not continually endeavored to maintain our confidence during this delay, I should perhaps have had the pain of being compelled to abandon a venture, that offered only risk, with scarcely a hope of profit.

I have never treated with any other person in France, and as the other Commissioners have ever been lacking in common civility to me, I testify that if my zeal, my advances of money, and my shipments of supplies and merchandise have been acceptable to the august Congress, their gratitude is due to the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Deane through their commercial affairs.

A letter was also sent to Deane from Count de Vergennes dated March 26, 1778, praying that he might find in his own country the same sentiments of regard he had inspired in France.

You need not ask [he wrote] for more than those I entertain for you, and shall preserve for you as long as I shall live.

The king, desirous of giving you a personal testimony of his satisfaction with your conduct, has charged me to inform M. the president of Congress of it; this is the object of the letters which M. Gérard will deliver you for Mr. Hancock. He will also deliver you a box with the portrait of the king.

The box was of gold, and was set with diamonds.

With these testimonials, and the assurance of his own conscience that he deserved well of the Republic, with much solicitude, yet with strong hopes that all would be well, Deane reached the United States.

The work of Deane in Europe, which he had wrought so zealously, and with such success for

nearly two years, was over. By reason of circumstances he could not control he was compelled to work in intimate alliance with a man with whom he had little in common, and the result was what we might naturally expect.

In the words of James Lovell in a letter to Franklin a year later: "In my opinion, the improper triplicate appointment for the Court of France produced, in very natural consequence, suspicion and animosity."

Thus returned to his native country the man who was appointed two years before, by an able committee of Congress consisting of Franklin, Morris, Jay, Harrison, and Dickinson, to secure supplies for America in her hour of need. He had performed well his task; despite his mistakes, he fulfilled the task which was set for him to do; the supplies reached Portsmouth in time for the campaign of 1777, which came to its culmination in the surrender of Burgoyne. The question, whether the history of the glorious year of 1777 would have been what it was, had the rancorous Arthur Lee been in the office Deane so ably filled, we need not stay to discuss. Deane did the work he was bidden perform, and the victory at Saratoga was followed by the treaties with France of Feb. 6, 1778, and when Deane landed in America it was

on the shore of a Republic, taking its place among the nations of the world. He must have thrilled with gratitude for the part it had been his fortune to take in the events of those critical years, but there must also have been a deep solicitude in his mind, as he thought of Arthur Lee and his subtle and deadly intrigue.

The plan in Lee's mind, which lay behind the conspiracy, which issued in the recall, was clearly set forth in a letter he wrote Samuel Adams Oct. 4, 1777, in which he said:

I have within this year been at several Courts—of Spain, Vienna, and Berlin, and I find that this of France is the great wheel that moves them all. Here therefore the most activity is required, and if it should ever be a question in Congress about my destination, I should be much obliged to you for remembering that I should prefer being at the Court of France.

On the same day, he wrote to his brother Richard, another leader in Congress:

My idea of adapting characters and places is this: Dr. Franklin to Vienna, as the first, most respectable and quiet; Mr. Deane to Holland; and the Alderman (William Lee) to Berlin; Mr. Izard where he is; Mr. Jennings to Madrid. France remains the center of political activity, and here therefore I choose to be employed.

Again to R. H. Lee:

Things go on worse and worse every day among ourselves, and my situation is more painful. I see in every department neglect, dissipation, and private schemes. Being in trust here, I am responsible for what I cannot prevent, and these very men will probably be the instruments of having me called to an account for their misdeeds. There is but one way of redressing this, and remedying the public evil, and that is the plan I sent you before, of appointing the Doctor to Vienna; Deane to Holland; Jennings to Madrid, and leaving me here.

Lee's letters abound in vague charges, meager hints at the facts, frequent references to plunder and waste. One thing the scheming author was clear about—France was the only place for the play of his genius, he was the one man capable of turning the "great wheel," whose skillful revolutions would transform chaos to order, and usher in a new era in the annals of diplomacy; and the recall of Silas Deane was a cog in the political machinery of Arthur Lee.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE HOSTILITY OF CONGRESS

CROSSING the Atlantic in Comte d'Estaing's flagship, in company with Gérard de Rayneval, the first French Minister to America, Deane reached Philadelphia July 10, 1778, after a voyage of ninety-one days, and reported to Congress two days later.

A cordial greeting—a delegation from Congress, salutes, soldiers drawn up in the streets—met the Admiral and the Minister of our powerful ally. "I had the honor of being present the last Sabbath," wrote Henry Marchant, a member of Congress from Rhode Island, "at the most interesting interview that ever took place in America, or perhaps in the world, between Monsieur Gérard, the plenipotentiary of France, and the president of Congress. . . . This interview was most cordial, generous, and noble."

One would suppose that Silas Deane might naturally expect an ovation equally cordial with that of the Frenchmen, for through his energy,

address, and watchfulness, combined with the friendliness of Vergennes and the French Court, and the activity of Beaumarchais, eight shiploads of military supplies had been forwarded to the American army for its campaign of 1777-8. He had commissioned Pulaski, De Kalb, Lafayette, and Steuben as major-generals; he had signed the treaties of amity and commerce with Franklin and Lee; last of all he had persuaded Vergennes to send D'Estaing with a fleet of fourteen ships of the line and several frigates, a force sufficient to announce to the world that France was willing to do her utmost to carry out the provisions of the treaty.

Of this last achievement Deane wrote:

It was in my view sufficient to satisfy the utmost of my ambition or wishes. To this I applied myself and was fortunately successful. It is no vanity or presumption to say that it was, next to concluding the treaties, the greatest and most important service that could in any circumstances be rendered to this country, and the application was made and the design effected by myself solely. These are facts, well known and acknowledged even by my enemies.

Reaching Delaware Bay, July 10, he sent a message to the president of Congress, announcing his arrival, and that he should leave the ship in the afternoon and go to Philadelphia; and as soon

as he had recovered from an intermittent fever he would pay his respects to Congress, and offer his congratulations over the glorious events which had recently occurred.

Henry Laurens, president of Congress, welcomed Deane with all the cordiality and warmth of which his solemn nature was capable; there were many others, true friends, who congratulated Deane on his success; but the days went by, and there was no invitation from Congress to make a report. Deane sent word that he had recovered, and was ready to tell of the state of affairs in Europe for which he had been recalled. A month passed before any notice was taken of him, and on Aug. 15, it was ordered that he be introduced to Congress.

The letters from Franklin and Beaumarchais were read, expressing their confidence in Deane, and their high appreciation of his work.

He gave some information concerning European politics, and was ordered to attend on Monday, Aug. 17, and again on Friday, Aug. 21.

On Sept. 8, he wrote to ask if further attendance was required, but he received no reply.

On Sept. 8, he wrote John Hancock, declaring that his patience was worn out, that he could not and would not longer endure a treatment which carried with it marks of the deepest ingratitude,

that if Congress had not time to hear a man who came four thousand miles under the pretense of receiving intelligence from him, it was time that the good people of the Continent should know the manner in which their representatives conduct public business, and how they treat their fellow-citizens who have rendered the country most important services. He said he knew that the majority were disposed to do him justice, and they complained of the delay, but a few men could put off the decision of any question, by one means or another, as long as they pleased.

/ On Sept. 18, the committee, to which had been referred letters from Arthur Lee, reported. On the same day a member in his place informed the House that he had information that Carmichael had charged Deane with misappropriation of public money. He was ordered to reduce the charge to writing.

On Sept. 19, hostile letters from Izard were introduced.

On Sept. 23, William Carmichael was summoned to the bar and examined upon oath.

On Sept. 24, Deane asked for copies of Izard's letters.

On Sept. 28, Carmichael was questioned; no

opportunity was given Deane to explain, and no direct charges or complaints were made.

It was perhaps about this time that Hosmer, a member of Congress, whose failing health compelled his resignation, told Deane of the conspiracy against him, of the poisoning of the minds of many members by Arthur Lee, and of their purpose to wear him out by repeated delays. He said he had overheard some of Deane's enemies talking the matter over, and their plan was, not to bring specific charges, but to destroy him by delay.

On Oct. 12, 1778, Deane sent to the president of Congress answers to the letters of Arthur Lee and Ralph Izard, and wrote that he had been three months in attendance, that his health, interests, and honor would not permit him to stay much longer in America, that he wished to go into the country the next day, and to engage passage for France for the next month. We are not to think of Deane as imagining for a moment that he was to serve again as Commissioner; John Adams had been chosen to his place; but he had business in France which demanded his attention.

But Congress took no definite action on his case, though reminded repeatedly of Deane's anxiety for the closing of the case.

Deane said that in the letters of Izard there were

charges against all the Commissioners, but that Lee had been left out wholly, and the blame had been laid solely on Franklin and himself; and then he proceeds to represent the Doctor as entirely under Deane's influence.

"My situation," he wrote, "is peculiarly unfortunate; Izard's letters were written with as much design of impeaching Franklin's conduct, yet it operates solely against me."

Here is a sample of the contents of Izard's letters: "If the whole world had been searched it would have been impossible to find a person more unfit than Deane for the trust with which Congress favored him." Such a statement was an insult to the Committee, of which men of the judgment of Morris and Dickinson were members; a man who could write such a statement would have no influence on fair-minded men.

One of the charges made by the gang of conspirators against Deane was that he had such hauteur and presumption as to give offense to every gentleman with whom he had any business.

To this Deane replied:

I appeal to the business I transacted. I arrived in Paris in July without funds, uncertain of remittances, without credit, ignorant of the language and manners of France, an utter stranger to the persons in power

and influence in the Court; the news of our misfortunes in Canada arrived in France before me, and of subsequent misfortunes immediately after.

The artifices and opposition of the British had to be overcome, yet before Dec. 1, he had forwarded thirty thousand stands of arms, an equal number of suits of clothes, over two hundred and fifty pieces of brass artillery; tents and other stores to a large amount had been shipped from the different ports. Many of these supplies were in use against Burgoyne; he had established a correspondence with Holland, Russia, and other nations, and laid the foundation for a grant of money from Versailles.

The second charge was, that Arthur Lee said that his despatches to Congress had been opened by Deane. Of this Deane said that Lee never intimated it to him, and it was a groundless calumny.

On Oct. 12, Deane sent Congress a letter, in which he took up Lee's charge, "that millions had been spent, and almost everything remains to be paid for." In reply to this Deane insists:

Mr. Lee has in his hands the accounts of all the monies received and paid out on the public account. He knows that the total amount received by the Commissioners, to the time of my leaving Paris, was 3,753, 250 livres, and the whole expense to that day was 4,046,293 livres; the greater part of this was ex-

pended by and with Mr. Lee's orders. The whole is well known to him, and I sent him in writing an explanation of every payment made in his absence.

What I have observed in Mr. Lee's letter confirms me in the opinion, which Dr. Franklin and some others have for some time had of him, that from a long indulgence of his jealous and suspicious disposition and habits of mind, he at last arrived on the very borders of insanity, and at times he even passes that line; and it gives me pleasure, though a melancholy one, that I can attribute to the misfortune of his head what otherwise I must place to a depravity of the heart.

Deane refutes the assertion of Lee that contracts were concealed from him with the greatest care, and adds: "I never knew Mr. Lee satisfied with any person he did business with, whether of public or private nature, and his dealings, whether for trifles or things of importance, almost constantly ended in dispute and sometimes in litigious quarrels."

Through tiresome months of the autumn and winter of 1778, and on until more than a year had gone by, Deane waited on Congress, compelled at heavy expense to stay in Philadelphia, not knowing on which day he might be summoned: his business suffering, all family claims put in the background, appealing repeatedly for definite charges and for the privilege of rendering his accounts.



Years later he wrote from London that he had duplicates of forty-two such urgent appeals he made without avail. He was of course unable to give all the details of his business transactions with all the vouchers. He had not been asked to do so in the letter recalling him. There was no time to send to Strassburg, Marseilles, Nantes, for the accounts of transactions, many of which he carried through covertly to elude the English. Vergennes insisted that he should go to America secretly, and to call in the accounts would have consumed many weeks. He said he could account for every farthing expended.

That Deane was not constantly brooding over his trials appears from a letter to the president of Congress dated November, 1778, in which he makes suggestions on two important subjects: the redemption of money—the paper issue of forty millions; and also upon the establishment of a marine. He urged that a fleet of forty sails be got to sea the following year, and that a bank be established in Europe by securing a loan of twenty-five million dollars, and establishing a sinking fund to pay off principal and interest in sixteen years. He argues against the plan of Congress to repudiate the first issue and put out another, and says, "I fear the result of a total bankruptcy,

which to me appears more than probable in the present plan."

On Nov. 30, he writes his brother Barnabas of his fears of a general bankruptcy, as the majority of the members of Congress oppose the attempt to make a foreign loan. He says he has made up his mind to publish an account of his case; he had struggled long against it, but he had come to the conclusion that it was his duty, perhaps one of the last duties he could render his country, as it seemed best to him to escape from the ingratitude from which he was so keenly suffering: his wife had died; his son was in France; the air was full of rumors which Lee, Izard, and the rest of the conspirators were industriously spreading, that Deane had become enormously rich, and that his demand for the settlement of the accounts and the payment of a large balance was pure bluff. Congress was at its wit's end to get money for the army. Paper money was worth about ten cents on a dollar, and before Deane returned to France it shrank to five.

It was a dismal time for America. There were two parties in Congress, the National and the States Rights: prominent in the former were Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Hancock, Morris, Madison, Livingston, and the Virginia statesmen

generally; leaders of the latter party were the Lees, John Adams, and Samuel Adams. The last named was friendly to the Lees from the first. It was through his influence that Arthur Lee was appointed to represent Massachusetts in London. He was devoted to the project of exciting alarm against Washington; he voted against every measure to increase Washington's influence. There were days when no more than fifteen members attended. There was a powerful faction which aimed at the recall of Franklin and the election of Arthur Lee in his place, and Lee was striking at Franklin behind his back as hard as he dared.

Determined if possible to become the central figure in Paris, which was the heart of political influence in Europe, Lee bent every nerve to unseat the older and more eminent Commissioner; he probably would have succeeded had it not been for the direct and energetic influence of the French Ambassador, M. Gérard. It is said that at one time the majority to sustain Franklin was only one. Gérard claims the honor of having defeated the Lees. In one of his letters to Vergennes he says: "The stories of Arthur Lee are but an absurd tissue of falsehoods and sarcasm, which can only compromise those who have the misfortune of being obliged to have anything to do with him."

In another letter Gérard wrote:

I explained myself gradually, and not until the very instant when it was indispensable to prevent this dangerous and bad man (Arthur Lee) from displacing Franklin, and being at the same time charged with negotiations with Spain. I cannot conceal from you that I rejoice every day more and more in having been able to assist in preventing this misfortune.

The struggle was long, lasting through the spring and a part of the summer of 1779, until the country clamored for an end of strife. At length Franklin was confirmed, and Arthur Lee, William Lee, and Ralph Izard were recalled.

The fate of Deane was unlike that of Franklin; the conspiracy was too powerful, too subtle for the former: whichever way the doomed man turned he met hostility open or disguised. Congress was crystallizing into two camps—those for Deane, and those against him. This process was hastened by an address by Deane Dec. 5, 1778, in the *Philadelphia Packet*, which we may label “War to the Knife.” In it he said that he had been compelled to take that course by the refusal of Congress to consider his cause.

He said that he had been honored with one colleague, and saddled with another; that the Commissioners, believing that Lee could nowhere

be of less service than at Paris, had sent him to Spain in February, where his wanton display of his errand had given just offense. In May he had gone to Germany, where he did nothing but lose his papers.

In February, 1777, William Lee, an alderman of London, and brother of Arthur, was appointed commercial agent in France, and he was urged to come at once to attend to matters of great moment. He waited four months, and then went to Nantes, where he declined to remedy certain affairs, lest, as he admitted, his property in England might be affected. Afterward, when he was appointed Commissioner to the Courts of Vienna and Berlin, he manifested his customary appetite for graft.

These brothers, Arthur and William, he would treat with tenderness as they had two brothers in Congress, but candor compelled him to say that they gave universal disgust to the nation whose aid we solicited, through an undisguised hatred and contempt for the French nation, which greatly embarrassed the other Commissioners and prejudiced their affairs.

He spoke of the opinion which many had of Lee, that he was in league with the British Ministry through Lord Shelburne, his English patron.

Lee was dragged into signing the treaties with France with the greatest reluctance, and the moment they were signed, though they were to be kept a secret for a time, Lee's private secretary hastened to England, and soon afterward Charles James Fox, a friend of Lord Shelburne, publicly declared their leading provisions in the House of Commons.

He complains that while Congress had voted on Dec. 8, 1777, to recall him, and he was ready early in July with his report, Congress waited five weeks, then gave him two hearings, on Aug. 19 and 21, and he had been unable to gain a third.

We can imagine the excitement this drastic paper excited: John Adams piously desired that its author be given over to Satan to buffet. It would have seemed rather natural to Deane to have that prayer answered, after his long experience with Lee!

Gérard's comment is significant here in view of the friendliness between the Lees and the austere Adams statesmen. Gérard says that Deane published a pamphlet which was not distasteful to the plurality of Congress, wearied and ashamed of the ascendancy of R. H. Lee and Samuel Adams.

We also bear in mind the fact that Lee secured his appointment to London through Samuel Adams.

It may not be in good taste for us in this milder age to criticize Deane for publishing such a letter; it was a time in which men used strong language and called things and people by their correct names, if they could think of words severe enough. Deane had been stung and goaded beyond endurance by the Lee party (I was tempted to say "gang"); the pent-up anger of years at last burst forth. Deane knew he could not make things worse; he thought that the doings of Congress, sitting behind closed doors, its treatment of a man who had conducted its business successfully in Europe ought to be known by the public at large; he intended to publish further chapters, but did not, for on Monday, Dec. 7, two days after the letter was issued, Congress voted to call in Deane and hear his story. But nothing came of it. Deane was permitted to give dribblets of information, but no attempt was made to examine his case fairly. A committee was appointed to investigate, but it did not give him a hearing, or ask him a question. Later in December, Deane was notified to attend immediately; he did so, gave some information, and was ordered to withdraw; it was voted that he await further orders.

Our chief source of information upon that stormy period is the newspapers, and the man who



heartily enjoyed the tempest was Thomas Paine, who was appointed secretary of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, of which R. H. Lee was chairman. He received a large bonus, so the report goes, and proceeded to dip his pen in gall and falsehood after the genuine Arthur Lee style. Innuendo and sarcasm, with a dash of bold lying, made him a vigorous defender of the Lees, and a bitter enemy of Deane, until even his employers could not endure him and he was discharged.

Here are samples of his brilliant genius: "There is something in the concealment of the papers that looks like embezzlement." "From the pathetic manner in which Deane speaks of his sufferings it appears that there is in this city a Book of Sufferings in which he is registered."

Robert Morris took up the defense of Deane: said he was a man of honor and integrity. Then Paine replied in the *Philadelphia Packet*, Jan. 12, 1779, saying: "The interest of Deane sat there in the person of his partner, Robert Morris, who, at the same time that he represented the state, represented likewise the partnership in trade."

On Jan. 14, 1779, there appeared in the *Packet* a card by Deane declaring that Paine's contention was false in every part. Paine had said that only one ship in three arrived with military supplies,



and that the *Mercury* and *Seine* fell into the hands of the enemy, whereas eight ships sailed from France with four million livres' worth of munitions of war, and only one was seized by the English, the *Seine*, after delivering a capital part of her cargo at Martinico.

The profitless discussion went on for weeks; back and forth the hot words passed; about the only good Deane received was an experience, which taught him never to repeat the experiment of getting justice by controversy in the newspapers. Deane has been sharply criticized for his exposure of the discord and strife among the Commissioners, and for his serious charges against men high in office, but we must remember that it was the crisis of Deane's life. Called suddenly home from a high office, to which he had been commissioned by five of the leading men of the country, he was met by delay and a vague atmosphere of suspicion. After five months of humiliating and expensive waiting, Deane was convinced that Hosmer's explanation was correct, and that his enemies were seeking to wear him out by delay.

The only serious charge against him was that he had used his agency to advance his private interests. In an article dated March 26, 1779, Paine said: "It is a general belief that you ne-

gotiated a proffered present amounting to two hundred thousand pounds into a purchase, and embezzled, or were privy to embezzling, the public despatches to promote the imposition."

It is hard to see how wild talk like this could make any impression on considerate men; but no doubt even they would say that where there was so much smoke there must be a little fire.

There is an enlightening letter from James Lovell to Franklin, dated May 15, 1778, in which he speaks of the constraint brought to bear on Congress to take the position it did toward Deane:

You have no adequate idea [he says] of the bold claims and even threats which were made against Congress, inducing the necessity of disavowing Mr. Deane's agreements, and the consequently more disagreeable necessity of recalling him. That gentleman's embarrassments have always been considered as apologies for his compliances, and you may rely upon it that imagined if not real necessity alone has governed the decision of Congress with respect to him, and that he will find congenial regard for the manner in which he has conducted our affairs abroad.

It is a relief to read this considerate statement of a man so intelligent and able as the secretary of Congress. It helps explain the fact that men like Samuel Adams, despite Thomas Paine's bluster

and cry of fraud, played into the hands of the Lees, Izards, and Carmichaels.

Arthur Lee, Iago-like, had done his work only too well. His brother Richard Henry was a good second. Gérard's description of the latter is vivid: "He has a secret ambition and dissimulation equal to that of the people of the East, and a rigidity of manners and the gravity that is natural to Presbyterians. He is laborious, intelligent, and supple."

In a reply to this able chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, dated Jan. 26, 1779, Deane refers to words in Lee's paper, "libel, fabulous, innuendo, calumnies," and says they suggest the influence of Thomas Paine, who has told the public that he for several years was your intimate acquaintance.

You say [Deane continues]: "Had I winked at all information of public abuse, I do not think I should have incurred Mr. Deane's censure, but whilst I am honored with public trust it shall be my constant endeavor to prevent the community from being injured, and certainly to insist that all those who have fingered large sums of money should be called upon for a fair and honest settlement."

Have I been charged with abuse of the public trust? Has Congress or any one member brought forward any such charge?

You say: "Mr. Deane talks much about his great services and good conduct, how happens it that of the four Commissioners besides himself, three are so clear and strong in reprobating that conduct?"

Who are those three? Two are your brothers, and the third not Dr. Franklin. Dr. Franklin's conduct is as surely reprobated as mine.

Then he quotes Franklin, who said he had been for fifteen months in the same house with Deane and had always found him a faithful, active, and able minister. Deane tells R. H. Lee that if he told the whole he would have said: "Of four Commissioners in public service, three, Mr. Arthur Lee, Mr. Wm. Lee, and Mr. Izard, reprobate, the fourth highly approves."

Franklin's opinion is seen in a letter he wrote about this time to Arthur Lee. There is less evidence of the calmness and mildness of the patient philosopher in it than in some of his other writings, but we may believe that he had not lost his insight or good judgment when he wrote Lee:

Your angry charge of "making a party business of it" is groundless. You magnify your zeal to have the public accounts settled, and insinuate that Mr. Deane and I prevented it by taking possession of all the vouchers and by taking constantly the public papers to ourselves, which are the property of all the Commissioners. When this comes to be read in the

Committee, for which it seems to be calculated rather than for me, who know the circumstances, what can they understand by it but that you are the only careful, honest man of the three; and that we have some knavish reason for keeping the accounts in the dark, and you from seeing the vouchers?

But the truth is the papers came into Mr. Deane's hands and mine first, as he was engaged in purchasing goods for Congress before either you or I came into France; next, as somebody must keep the papers, and you were either on long journeys or had a commission to go and reside in Spain, whereas Mr. Deane and I lived almost constantly in the same house in Passy, we did most of the business. Where could the papers be so properly placed as with us who had daily occasion to use them?

I never knew you desired to have the keeping of them. You were never refused a paper. You ask why I act so inconsistently with my duty to the public. This is a heavy charge, Sir, which I have not deserved. To the public I am accountable, and not to you. I have been a servant to many publics through a long life; have served them with fidelity and honored approbation. There is not a single instance of my ever being accused before of acting contrary to their interests or my duty. I shall account to Congress when called upon for this my terrible offense of being silent to you.

It is true I have omitted answering some of your letters, particularly your angry ones in which you, with very magisterial airs, schooled me, as if I had been one of your domestics. I saw your jealous, suspicious, malignant, and quarrelsome temper, which was daily manifesting itself against Mr. Deane, and

almost every other person you had any concern with. I therefore passed your affronts in silence, I did not answer, but burnt your angry letters, and received you with the same civility as if you had not written them. Perhaps I may still pursue the same conduct.

At another time Franklin wrote Lee:

I do not know that either Mr. Deane or myself ever showed any unwillingness to settle the public accounts. You could at any time have obtained the accounts as readily as either of us, and you had abundant more leisure. If on examining them, you had wanted explanations on any article, you might have called for it and had it: you never did either. As soon as I obtained the account, I put it into your hands, and desired you to look into it, and I have heard no more of it till now.

The bitterness of those miserable days, and the ease with which the mind of a good man could be poisoned, is seen in the following quotation from the immortal diary of that high-minded John Adams, who was a better man than any one else was in his judgment capable of being. He wrote in his diary Feb. 8, 1779, his opinion of Deane's address, that it was

the most wicked and abominable production that ever sprang from a human heart. He appeared to me in the light of a wild boar, that ought to be hunted down for the benefit of mankind. I have given him up to Satan to be buffeted. There are certain in-

fallible proofs of vanity, presumption, ambition, avarice, and folly in Mr. Deane as to render him unworthy of confidence, and therefore Dr. Franklin has been deceived.

The only comment upon this childish opinion of Adams is to put by the side of it his opinion, when he took the office left vacant by Deane, that Deane had fulfilled his mission ably and well.

On April 17, 1779, Deane wrote Congress that his family had suffered much by his absence, he wished to leave the city the next week.

On May 22, he wrote the president of Congress:

Conversing with an honored friend, I asked him how it was possible that when there was so much to do in France I had been ordered home. He answered that it was the design of those who wished to sacrifice me to family interests to wear me out by delays, and, without any direct charges, to ruin me in the opinion of my countrymen by insincere hints and innuendoes. I was unable then to think my friend's suspicions correct, yet now they are confirmed.

On June 10, a motion was made that Deane should not depart, and that Arthur Lee be recalled, but it did not pass.

The comment of Henry Laurens, President of Congress, is significant: "If Deane goes in defiance of Congress, it will be a confession."

About the only consolation Deane had in that

period was the satisfaction of being several thousand miles distant from Arthur Lee, whose presence with him in Paris had brought on a premature Purgatory. But Lee's spell was on Congress, and still it delayed action.

Vergennes wrote Oct. 29, 1778, "I fear Mr. Lee and those about him. . . ." and this consideration induced the Court at Versailles to keep secret from Arthur Lee the intended sailing of Count d'Estaing, and on several occasions he created the highest disgust at Versailles. The Court of Madrid had the same opinion of him. Mr. S. Nicholson wrote William Carmichael: "I have heard Dr. Franklin say he thought Arthur Lee was crazy, and I am sure it was current enough at Nantes."

There must have been method in a madness which could so thoroughly undermine the reputation of such a man as Deane; but Laurens, president of Congress, though apparently an effusive friend, was at heart a deadly enemy; the Lees, Izard, Carmichael, Col. Duer, Tom Paine, Samuel Adams, and some others worked together, and while, as Gérard said, the majority in Congress was in favor of Deane, his enemies were strong and skillful enough to lay every motion which looked toward action on the table, and at



the same time hinder every effort toward definite charges.

It was a brilliant example of malice and pettiness triumphing over a man whom circumstances had put into the power of a combination of determined men, who, with greater or less sincerity, set aside all principles of justice, all rules of equity, all motives of gratitude, all feelings of compassion, and even of sympathy, and condemned a public officer, uncharged and unheard, for crimes exploited by innuendo and insinuated by clandestine hate. } On Aug. 6, 1779, Congress voted to discharge Deane from further attendance, and the several agents and Commissioners were ordered to send in, without delay, their accounts and vouchers for settlement.

On Aug. 16, Deane sent Congress a memorial, recounting the main facts of his mission, and urging that some one be appointed to audit his accounts and pay the balance, as his private fortune had suffered seriously because of his service for the public.

On Aug. 26, he received an order from the continental treasurer for ten thousand five hundred dollars, "in full consideration of time and expenses during attendance on Congress from June 4, 1778, to Aug. 6, 1779." Paper money was worth five

cents on a dollar, and Deane refused this pittance as wholly inadequate and unfair.

On Nov. 16, Deane wrote Congress expressing his zeal for his country, and his purpose soon to return to France to vindicate that which was dearer than life or fortune,—his honor and character.

He left America June 14, 1780, assured that his accounts would be audited on presentation with vouchers; he reached France, July 27, and was received by Franklin to his lodgings.

The most vivid imagination cannot exaggerate the keenness of Deane's disappointment at the outcome of his stay in Philadelphia.

He came after two years' absence, conscious that he had well fulfilled the charge of the Committee; he was on board D'Estaing's flagship, in company with his friend Gérard, the Minister, whose coming had been made possible by the treaty which Deane had the honor to sign.

He came to a city of which he wrote a year later:

It may at this instant be truly said there are few unhappier cities on the globe than Philadelphia: the reverse of its name is its present character. It is a melancholy reflection to think that, whilst our common enemy is wasting our seacoasts and laying

our fairest and most peaceable towns in ashes, we are quarreling among ourselves, and can scarcely be constrained from plunging our swords into each other's bosoms.

He came to meet the coolness, the averted faces, the hostility of the Congress, where he had been a peer of the best statesmen of America, before the reign of selfish cabals and the junto rule.

He was compelled to stand at the closed doors of that Congress and plead for a hearing; he was compelled to endure the ignominy of groundless charges, made through venomous rumor and underhanded spite.

During the fourteen months of waiting on men whose indifference and neglect were cruel and heart-breaking, he was summoned but twice to meet the Congress that had recalled him upon a pretense; he was treated like a criminal, without a criminal's opportunity to hear the charges and answer the complaint.

No wonder deep-seated discouragement was planted in his mind.

## CHAPTER X

### DEANE'S SECOND MISSION TO FRANCE A FAILURE

THE warning of Deane's friend Hosmer, that the conspirators would "wear him out by delay," was coming true. Compare his prospects and courage when he went out in 1776, or when he returned in 1778, with his feelings when he went to France in 1780, after two years of the most anxious and harassing struggle, disappointment, hostility, and ingratitude.

It is true that he was relieved of the daily irritations of Arthur Lee's suspicious and scheming presence, but there were allies of Lee who thwarted Deane at every turn. He missed the wise and genial friendliness of Franklin, but he enjoyed the confidence of Robert Morris, who wrote Jay, Aug. 16, 1778: "Many persons whom you know are very liberal of illiberality. Your friend Deane, who hath rendered the most essential services, stands as one accused. The storm in-

creases, and I think some one of the tall trees must be torn up by the roots."

The next month Morris wrote: "I think our friend Deane has much public merit, has been ill-used, but will rise superior to his enemies."

Morris knew what it was to pass through a storm of calumny and detraction, as did Washington and Franklin, but Deane's situation was peculiarly unfortunate, because of the combination of personal ambition and prejudice, financial depression, and the complicated system whereby the supplies were secured. Deane was waiting on Congress at its ebb-tide,—a time partially explained by Prof. W. G. Sumner in his *Finances of the Revolution*, when he says, "The failure of requisitions in the American Revolution must be referred to the all-pervading lack of organization and the low vitality of the Union."

He came hither in d'Estaing's flagship with Gérard, the French minister; he went back after a vain attempt to sweep away a poisoned atmosphere of innuendo and malice.

The one thing, which proved to be in the same class with the rest of his treatment at the hands of Congress, was the assurance of Congress that an officer would be appointed to examine and pass upon his accounts.

He carried a letter which Morris wrote him March 31, 1780, in which he said:

Reflecting on the unrestricted abuse you have suffered, and not knowing whether you have any evidence with you to show that your particular friends were not infected with the pestilence of the times, I have suddenly and hesitatingly scribbled a letter to Dr. Franklin, in which I have expressed pretty concisely the sentiments due to him, you and myself. I consider that we have been fellow-laborers in the vineyard, and although our works speak for themselves before that impartial Master, who knows all actions, and the secret springs that give rise to them, yet the evidence of one honest man in favor of another is but too often necessary to protect virtue and innocence against the shaft of malice and envy in this short-sighted world.

Morris's letter to Franklin has the same date as the above, and in it we read:

I do not know that what I am going to write is necessary, or that Mr. Deane will thank me, but he has always manifested a warm attachment to your person and character before Congress; it might be some satisfaction to you and him to have a testimony of this kind from a friend to you both, who, having nothing to seek or ask for yourself, can mean nothing but to promote that harmony and friendship which he wishes to continue between two worthy men. I consider Mr. Deane as a martyr in the cause of America. After rendering the most signal and important services, he has been reviled and traduced in

the most shameful manner. But I have not a doubt the day will come when his merit shall be universally acknowledged, and the authors of those calumnies held in the detestation they deserve.

My own fate has been in some degree similar. After four years of indefatigable service, I have been reviled and traduced for a long time by whispers and insinuations, which at length were fortunately wrought up to public charges, which gave me an opportunity to show how groundless, how malicious these things were; how innocent and honest my transactions. My enemies, ashamed of their persecutions, have quitted the pursuit, and I am in peaceable possession of the most honorable station my ambition aspires to, that of a private citizen of a free state. Yourself, my good Sir, have had a share in these calamities, but the malice, which gave them vent, was so evident, as to destroy its own poison: they could not cast even a cloud over your justly and much-revered character. These things have taught me a lesson of philosophy, which may be of service. I find most useful members of society have most enemies, because there is a number of envious beings in human shape; and if my opinion of mankind in general is grown worse from my experience of them, that very circumstance raises my veneration for those characters that justly merit the applause of virtuous men. In this light I view Dr. Franklin and Mr. Deane, and under this view of them I assert, with an honest confidence, that I have a just and equitable title to a return of that friendship which I think is honorable to profess for them, with that degree of truth and affection which impresses me with it.

Deane's temper as he set out on his second mission to Europe is suggested in a letter to his brother Barnabas, written two months before he sailed:

I hope in ten days to set my face for Europe. My heart has long been sick, not of America, but with distress for her. . . . You will think that I write in a desponding turn of mind. I do not, but I am not gay. A consciousness of the rectitude of my intentions supports me, and I trust will to the last, whatever may happen.

Unable to leave the country at the time appointed, he wrote April 23, to a friend: "I leave the country with a heavy and foreboding heart: I have had the fortune of Cassandra hitherto; my dictions have been universally disbelieved and disregarded, and yet unfortunately have been fulfilled."

In a letter to Joseph Webb June 20, 1780, he speaks of his anxiety concerning the Webb family, and says:

The comfort I receive from a clear conscience affords me some cheerful moments in the darkest scenes. . . . I hope in a year or two we can meet in peace and at ease, but if not, He who directs knows best. I go perfectly resigned to my fate, whatever it may be in my voyage, and therefore am not so unhappy as I should otherwise be.

To keep our narrative clearly in mind, we outline



again the case as Deane understood it in his demands upon Congress. In his last letter to Congress before sailing, he wrote that he agreed with the Secret Committee that his expenses should be borne, and a commission of five per cent. allowed. Unable, because of lack of funds, to buy many of the goods ordered, he devoted himself to the purchase of arms, clothing, and cannon, and he engaged in no private, commercial business. The commission on the goods bought, up to the time he was appointed to act jointly with Franklin and Lee, amounted to seventy-eight thousand seven hundred dollars. He also purchased and fitted out fifteen ships, most of them being large ships, and only one miscarried. He was often embarrassed and hard-pressed for money, and, but for repeated and urgent application to certain great personages, he would have been landed in ruin. The amount of goods, stores, and ships purchased by him amounted to over two million dollars, nearly all of which landed safely in America, the only ship that was lost went to Martinique, contrary to his orders.

Soon after he reached Paris he received a letter from Robert Morris which must have cheered him. It is dated Philadelphia, July 3, 1780. Morris says:

You will steadily pursue the object that induced you to return to Europe, which will enable you to set your transactions for America in that just and fair light in which they ought to stand, and give you that high share of merit with your country that I do most firmly believe to be justly your due. I am determined to keep myself clear of all that public employment which exposes an honest man to the envy and jealousy of mankind, at the same time that it lays him open to the malicious attacks of every dirty scoundrel that deals in the murder of reputation.

There are two grains of comfort in Deane's letter of Aug. 4 to his brother Simeon. He says that he finds his son Jesse just what he could wish him to be; the other is that Arthur Lee had sailed to America three weeks before. "He has gone," Deane writes, "charged with all the malice and revenge which hell is capable of inspiring him with, and for me. I am determined to fight my adversaries, in Congress and out, to the last, and in a manner that will not cause my friends to blush."

On reaching Paris, Deane did not find that his reputation had suffered from the abuse he had received in America, but he did find that the devotion of France was cooling, and that the repudiation resolutions of Congress of March 18 had ruined our credit in Europe.

On Sept. 18 he wrote Jay that it was almost as much a disgrace to be known to be an American, as it was two years before to be an honor; that "Fraudulent, "Bankrupt," were the adjectives used to stigmatize the insurgents. He says:

I know the weakness of Congress, and the malignity of Lee and his associates, but the situation of America wrings my soul: ruined by weak, distracted counsels, and betrayed by those in whom she has confided. May you, my worthy friend, be so happy as never to experience how painful and how cutting it is to be treated with public ingratitude, edged and driven on by the treachery of those in whom you have confided; you merit a better fate, but that will not secure you, without the prudence, of which you happily have so great a portion, and of which I have so little. France rings with complaints of heavy losses of merchants by the depreciation of America.

Many had put large sums in the Loan Office when American paper money was worth twenty-five cents on a dollar, but the resolution of March 18 and the circular letter of September fixed the paper money at two and a half cents, and in effect prevented any appreciation from that; and the merchants in France drew the inference that, if Congress could annihilate thirty-nine fortieths of their notes, nothing prevents their extinguishing the residue.

The fact that Deane's own property, which amounted to more than fifteen thousand dollars, when he returned to Europe, was rapidly diminishing, did not increase his cheerfulness.

A letter from John Jay of Oct. 26, 1780, contains a plain recital of the charge against Deane in America. "You were blamed," Jay wrote, "not for omitting finally to settle your accounts in France, but for not being in a capacity to show, when in America, how far your measures were prudent. I think some of them were, and some were not." Jay criticizes him for feeling resentful toward the American people, but gently adds: "There are comparatively not many who, under similar circumstances, either think right, or act so. I believe you honest, and I think you injured." He urges Deane to sift and discover the exact evidence concerning the duplicity of his enemies.

In reply, Deane said he had given the accounts, so far as he could, without actual and minute settlement; that within six weeks of his arrival he had laid before Congress an authentic account of all moneys received or paid out, and a general account of what they had been paid for.

He thanks Jay for questioning the prudence of some of his measures, adding:

I confess, on reflection, I do not approve of all the measures I took, but they were such as the time dictated, and such as at the time I thought most prudent. Though, viewed at this distance, they may be deemed less prudent than they really were, I find most of them produced real benefits to America, and that the worst consequences of any of them have fallen solely on myself.

Who can deny the justice of the complaint that follows? "Allowing some or all of my measures to have been imprudent, still my complaint lies against Congress, for not informing me of what I had done wrong, that I might have had an opportunity of vindicating myself in the best manner in my power."

Then he gives another evidence of the conspiracy which had drawn its malignant nets around him, saying:

With respect to the duplicity of some of my pretended friends in Congress, I had some suspicion before I left America, and since, I have full proof of it. Letters sent from hence with express orders to be committed to me, and to be made use of in Congress for my justification, were suppressed. I know they were received, and I have copies of them, which is more. The persons capable of this, who appeared on all occasions publicly to support me against the Lee faction, since the displacing of those men, have declared that they had no view of serving me or my cause, but to make use of both to destroy the Lee interests.

Then follows a gloomy prophecy; the suffering had been so long and so continuous that his brave heart was bending.

I have nearly finished [he wrote] the settlement of my accounts and those of the Commission, the result of which is a large balance in my favor. Will this establish my reputation, and procure justice for injuries I have received in character and fortune? I do not flatter myself with any such hope.

The reason for this desponding mood is clear-sighted and convincing:

The men to whom I am to apply for this justice are those who have injured me, and, in doing it, must condemn themselves—a self-denial or heroism not to be expected from them; but, supposing them capable of this, will it recall the envenomed shafts of calumny shot at me from behind their shield? I grant that the bulk of the people mean well, but from a suspicion that the greater part of men in public employ are dishonest, a suspicion at this time more prevalent with the people of America than with any other, you will find fifty, nay one hundred, who will receive with open ears a calumny, and will propagate the same with as much industry as if their character and interest depended on its being spread and believed—to a single one who will take any pains to undeceive himself and others.

He adds that many in Congress knew that he entered public service with fair character and easy

fortune, and all America knew that, however imprudent some of his measures appear, he rendered essential service to his country. The French officers he commissioned either did good service, or were sent home; yet Congress refuses to do anything to rescue his reputation, investigate the charges, or rescue the fortune spent in its service.

A few days later he writes John Paul Jones a letter of sympathy and appreciation of his ardor and patriotism. Jones had suffered from Arthur Lee's selfishness and discourtesy.

There is a letter of Beaumarchais to Vergennes of the date of Dec. 2, 1780, which shows how the clouds of trouble are gathering about Deane. The men to whom he had intrusted his money failed him, some of them dishonestly, and the depreciation in America weakened him. Beaumarchais says:

Poor Mr. Deane, brought to Europe to conclude all business he had undertaken for Congress, and expecting to find funds to enable him to live here until his return, or the settlement of his accounts would reimburse him for all his advances, now finds himself without the means of subsistence; he has applied to Dr. Franklin, but he has no authority for furnishing money. I am the only person to whom he has entirely confided, and he shows a bitterness that borders on something worse. I am so embarrassed, I can offer him only temporary assistance.



What follows, Beaumarchais would probably have put stronger ten years later, after his own trying experience of the ingratitude of a republic. "After his departure I reflected that it was perhaps a grave political error to drive to desperation those who have rendered important service to the state, as the contemptible new republican country does to all deserving men who have forwarded her interests."

On Feb. 23, 1781, Deane wrote his brother Simeon a gloomy letter. He thinks that no more troops or money can be secured from France, and with neither money, nor credit, nor friends, independence is out of the question. He complains that, while he has nearly closed his accounts, the auditor, Mr. Johnson, whom Congress had appointed, had declined to act. Deane does not know what to do; some days he thinks he will return to America with his accounts, but the uncertainty deters him. He fears the coming season will increase the distraction and distress. The war between England and Holland is unfavorable to us, for France and Spain depend largely on Holland for supplies. He learns that England is in high spirits, and has nearly one hundred men-of-war on the stocks, and forty ships of the line building.



Out of the depression of an empty pocket, and the cloud of calumny that was about him, he adds: "Unless our finances can be well established, army increased and supported, and national and internal forces of the Continent brought to act with consistency and energy, the game will soon be up."

He writes his brother Barnabas that balances have been refused him until the original vouchers have been examined in Philadelphia. "Judge my feelings and suffering!" he exclaims.

A wholesome letter from John Jay of the date of Mar. 28, 1781, reached Deane in the midnight of his depression. Would that its wise counsels had been followed! As is apt to be the case under such conditions, Deane was talking too much. Jay writes:

Mr. Carmichael has been informed (I believe by letter from some person in France) that you had, in some late conversation on American affairs, spoken much to their disadvantage, and in a manner very discouraging. You must be sensible that such reports will be no less prejudicial to you in America than in Europe. Your reasons for not publishing your defense at present do you honor. Let me advise you, however, to omit no opportunity of authenticating the facts essential to it, and to hold yourself constantly in readiness to seize the first proper opportunity of convincing the world, that you merit the thanks, not the reproaches, of your country. I believe you inno-

cent of the malversations imputed to you, and I feel for you the sympathy which such an opinion must create in every honest mind. In this enlightened age, when the noise of passion and party shall have subsided, the voice of truth will be heard and attended to. It is too true that mere private altercations have little effect upon the public mind, few thinking it worth their while to examine the merits of a dispute important only to the parties. This is not your case: your commission, and the manner in which it was executed, will ever be interesting to America, and therefore America will ever be ready to hear your cause, and to determine it justly according to evidence.

The opinion of the great jurist has been justified, but the verification came too late for the relief of Deane. Fifty years after his death the accounts were thoroughly sifted, and his cause established.

In a letter to Jay of April 8, 1781, speaking of Jay's criticism upon his disparaging remarks about America, which tended to discourage and prejudice, Deane says he only spoke the truth, and he thought it far wiser to do that than follow the method of many like Searles, a member of Congress, who, while in Europe, gave such a rose-colored view of our affairs, that the French were led to imagine that we had little need of further help.

Perhaps Deane went to the opposite extreme: he certainly had an experience of his own, which

made it possible for him to draw a dark picture. He admits that he told Vergennes five months before, that nothing short of money to support army and navy could save America; that our finances were totally deranged, commerce nearly ruined, naval force next to nothing, army suffering for lack of pay and clothing, and instant relief absolutely necessary. A letter from Washington about the same time to Vergennes justified Deane's contention, and fixed the relief of America solely on a supply of money for the army, and also a superior naval force, without which the cause of the colonists must soon fall.

A glimpse of the widespread conspiracy to ruin Deane is seen in a letter from Jonathan Williams, an honest American. The letter is dated at Nantes, April 18, 1781, in which he speaks of Thomas Paine, then in Europe, as an enemy of Deane and friend of the Lees and Izard, and says he hopes that after a longer stay there he will become acquainted with the Lee rascalities, and, like all other good men, despise the wretch.

On May 15, 1781, Deane wrote Congress that Johnson, who had been appointed to examine his accounts, declined to serve. Deane again reviews the case and entreats Congress to do him the justice he seeks.

My enemies [he laments] represented me as a defaulter, grown rich out of the public moneys in my hands, and prejudiced the minds of Congress so strongly against me, that my efforts in America to obtain even a hearing were vain and ineffectual. My present condition, as well as state of my accounts, gives the lie to every assertion or insinuation of that kind; yet I am still left to suffer under the calumny in America and to be obliged to strangers for money for my support.

In those dark days of poverty and worry in Paris, as he walked through the gay streets, or brooded in his lodgings, a letter came from Robert Morris, dated June 7, 1781, which must have comforted him. Morris rejoices to hear of Deane's safe arrival in France, because it will

enable you to justify by incontestable facts and proofs that character which has been so exceedingly traduced, and which I long to see placed in that respectable and meritorious point of view, which I believe it deserves; and the sooner you show your conduct in regard to money matters to have been strictly consistent with that honor and integrity, that I believe to have attended you through life, the better; as the infamous behavior of Arnold has put a weapon into the hands of your enemies, which they make use of to this day by giving you now and then a slashing stroke, in coupling his name and yours together in their publications, and always affecting to speak of you as a condemned man.

Morris refers to his recent appointment to the office of "Superintendent of Finance," and closes with: "I long to see the day when you shall honorably remove those aspersions which have been cast, and those suspicions that have been raised, by your rancorous enemies."

In June, Deane wrote his brother Simeon of his disappointment in his attempt to settle with M. Sabatier.

A month later he wrote Jay a gloomy letter in which he spoke of his thankfulness that he had not been prejudiced against his old friend by Carmichael. He adds: "Spain is not friendly to us; Holland has refused to receive Adams's credentials, nor can we raise money there. I set out to-morrow for a tour of the Netherlands and Holland."

Learning early in September that Arthur Lee's accounts, though neither audited in Europe nor offered for audit, had been passed by the board of accounts in Philadelphia, Deane was encouraged to write Morris, enclosing his accounts, though without the vouchers, as he had no duplicates; he explained in detail the whole situation: that his commission was only upon the goods bought prior to his election as Commissioner with Franklin and Lee, and was according to a contract

with the Secret Committee. He said that he might have taken his pay out of the funds in his hands, as others had done, but he had preferred to leave the settlement to Congress.

“Some,” he says, “acted differently, and find themselves at easy circumstances, uncensured by Congress or public voice. Had I done the same, I might possibly have escaped the obloquy thrown on me, at least I should have escaped the distress the last two years involved.”

After a year of fruitless endeavor in Paris to obtain a settlement, there came to Deane a letter from Beaumarchais, which exposes the emptiness of some of Lee's lies. Reviewing Deane's mission to buy supplies without resources or credit, other than the authority of his credentials, he writes:

I recall the ardor, the care, the persistency, and the exertions with which you commenced, continued, and finally concluded the delicate task of forwarding the consignments prepared by me for shipment to America. If your enemies have subsequently succeeded in belittling the value of your political or commercial services in the opinion of those whom you represented, it is a misfortune for your country and for you; and as witness of your exertions to serve your country, I cannot but deplore it.

It was these very services that inspired me with the greatest regard, esteem, and friendship for you, especially, since our ministry and all intelligent men in

our nation have, in common with myself, invariably recalled your sagacity, ability, and irreproachable conduct. I recall that you inadvertently mentioned that Congress promised you a commission of five per cent., I suspect that you are anxious for the fulfillment of the promise; I cannot hear without distress that the first representative, and one whose ability and exertions have rendered me efficient aid, should remain without sufficient remuneration. I have therefore decided to offer you two per cent. commission on all returns I may receive from Congress, whether money or goods of the ten per cent. allowed me, in case Congress absolutely refuses you any commission. This will be a poor return for your trouble.

This was a kind and generous letter, and the offer does credit to Beaumarchais' noble heart, but how little he realized how keen was to be his own suffering at the hands of the Congress, which permitted Deane to endure such misery; and that fifty years would pass before his own daughter would receive even a quarter of the just dues of her father, dying in poverty a generation before.

On Sept. 13, Deane wrote his brother Barnabas that he was ill with fever.

My patience is exhausted [he says] and my affairs ruined by the unexampled conduct of Congress, who have detained me here,—it is now more than a year,—waiting for the appointment of an auditor to settle my accounts, which in reality I believe they never wish or desire to have settled.



- ✓ On Sept. 19, 1781, Deane wrote James Wilson of the financial discouragements and losses he had sustained: everything on which he had built his hopes had failed—the mast contracts, Loan Office certificates, and the appointment of an auditor.

At the close, he said he believed De Grasse and Rodney had both gone to the Continent. He was mistaken there. How different would have been his expectation for America, could he have seen that at that time De Grasse was on his way from the West Indies to Yorktown with a powerful fleet and large reinforcements of soldiers, and that within a month Cornwallis would surrender.

On Sept. 26, he wrote his brother Barnabas of the gloomy prospects for America and of his unhappiness.

On the same date he wrote John Jay of the newspapers coupling him with Duane and Arnold, and says he thinks that the licentiousness in stigmatizing men in public trust with the vilest and most abusive epithets and characters, a fatal symptom of the universal anarchy, which is more to be dreaded than monarchy at the door.

On Oct. 20, he wrote from Ghent to Benj. Tallmadge, lamenting the prospect of dependence on France, which had twenty thousand veterans in



America, and says he may remain two or three months in Ghent; he is sick of Paris though treated there with generosity and kindness.

This brings us to the critical and dangerous attitude which Deane took in the fateful summer of 1781, when burdened by illness, worry, and poverty; heart-sick with the long delay of Congress; his courage weakened by his struggle with the venomous and underhanded conspiracy, he wrote letters which followed him to his lonely grave in the old churchyard in the town of Deal on the south coast of England.

## CHAPTER XI

### DEANE'S REPUBLICANISM WEAKENS

THE gloom gathering in the mind of Deane through multiplying misfortunes, and brooding over the condition of his country, found expression in the early summer of 1781, in nine letters which he wrote to friends in America, in which he gave expression to suggestions, damaging to himself, and, had they been adopted, most injurious to his country.

They are the so-called "Paris Papers," otherwise known as the "Intercepted Letters." They were written to intimate friends, with no expectation that they would sway the fortunes of America,—a supposition requiring an egotism in Deane, of which we have no evidence elsewhere.

The question why he wrote the letters must be laid aside with the question why many of us, when tired, nervous, and discouraged, do not keep quiet.

The vessel, which sailed from L'Orient in June, 1781, carrying those missives of a mind hurt by

ingratitude and disappointment, beginning to feel the iron of three long years of conspiracy and enmity entering the very heart of courage and enterprise, was captured by the British.

They were published by the Rivingtons, a Tory firm of New York, in *The Royal Gazette*, and afterwards in book form.

The first is dated June 14, 1781, Paris, and was addressed to Col. Wm. Duer, whom Deane then believed to be his friend.

He asks why continue the war. Congress is weakened by cabals and mismanagement. "Let them acknowledge their inability," he writes, "weigh fairly the probable chances of success to establish Independent Sovereignty, and if they find the probability against it, honestly confess it and put an end to the calamities of the country." He speaks of his dismal fate to play the Cassandra, and prophesy disaster, and adds, "The cold hand of despair is upon me."

On June 1, he wrote Robert Morris of the folly of continuing a process of exhausting and ruining one another.

Who will be the gainers? he asks. Will sovereignty, in the hands of a democracy, be a government under which our persons and property will be better secured than before the contest began? Will the

country flourish more under independency, than while connected with Great Britain?

In reading these words in the light of succeeding history, we need to make a distinct effort to place ourselves at the point of view of a man who for three years had tried in vain to persuade Congress to take the first steps toward fair dealing; a man, who had been a member of that legislative body, had been commissioned by a committee of its ablest men, and had successfully performed the task given him in France, in the judgment of Vergennes, Franklin, Jay, and Morris.

Deane had many needless fears about the commerce of the country, believing that the enmity of Great Britain would be a serious menace to it. He is convinced that England could hurt us by duties, restrictions, and prohibitions far more than France could help us.

Speaking of the complaint that England included America in the Navigation Act, he says that we shared in the protection of the British navy, which grew strong enough to defend us as the result of that policy. We complained that we were restrained from carrying certain articles to other markets, but British subjects were generally restrained from importing the same from other countries, and England gave us the monopoly of her markets.

We were prohibited from taking from foreigners articles we wanted, though not the growth or fabric of England, but these were very inconsiderable. Goods made in England are more solid and substantial than others. The complaint that England does not allow foreigners to bring their produce and merchandise to us is absurd.

That is the way England has built up her commerce, and we may be required to adopt similar methods. In punctuality, generosity, and quality England surpasses all other nations.

How can we pay for the goods we need? England gave us the preference in iron, naval stores, potash, flaxseed, and timber, and encouraged their introduction by bounties. With independence all this will change. Deane says he once supposed that England could not support her manufactures and commerce without American goods, but he has changed his opinion, for he finds that she can get tobacco and rice as cheaply from other countries, and that Cuban and Brazilian tobacco is superior to American.

Deane borrows a good deal of trouble over our commerce. He says that when we are independent, we can go where we please, but not find purchasers where we please, and nations will lay what impositions they please on our sales. The northern

powers of Europe have similar articles to sell with ours; Spain and Portugal only call for our flour and fish. If England loses the thirteen colonies, she will make the most of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Canada, and the Floridas.

We supposed that all the English manufacturing towns would clamor in our favor through want of employment: Ireland for flaxseed, and British West Indies for our goods. Six months corrects that: Ireland gets cheaper flaxseed, the West Indies suffer but little.

This would be amusing reading if it were not the agonizing cry of a stricken man. How different from the spread-eagle declarations of later years are these sentences? "The world is not so dependent on us,—we are more dependent on our neighbors than they on us."

He goes on to say that we shall be excluded from the ancient markets of Europe, or rivalled in them. It was the interest of Great Britain to promote our commerce in fish, lumber, and ship-building. Separate and free, her policy will reverse: she will shut her West India ports; sugar, coffee, and spices will be high; England will drive us out of our fisheries; Sweden and Russia can undersell us in iron, timber, and ships.

Without a marine, we shall be a target for insult

on every side. Our debt is immense. Commerce will be heavily taxed. Congress is unfavorable to commerce: their resolutions in almost every instance demonstrate their ignorance of the principles and effects of commerce. We have magnified our importance, buoyed by wild and groundless hopes.

France grows indifferent toward us; we are the cheapest instrument to employ one half of the forces of Great Britain. At this critical time we can make better terms than later.

On June 13, Deane wrote Jeremiah Wadsworth, insisting that Congress has an exaggerated view of its own importance, and it imagines that every European nation, except Great Britain, is interested to have us independent, though told to the contrary by every nation, except France.

Living in the atmosphere of Europe, Deane was affected by its spirit, and it seemed to him that our independence was spoken of differently from the style three years before. Experience shows that we are warmly attached to English manners, customs, and manufactures. Every American who visits France is impatient to go to England, despite the severe laws.

Nothing short of peace can save our country from ruin. The terms offered by Great Britain

furnish a good basis for a treaty, and although unpopular now, will not be so later.

In closing, Deane assured his solid old friend that, while their sentiments might differ, he must appreciate his motives.

On May 14, Deane wrote General S. H. Parsons, and laid stress on the increasing navy of England, with thirty new ships of the line and near forty frigates on the stocks, plenty of money coming in from the new loan, and the repeal of the obnoxious acts that brought on the war.

June 1, he wrote Charles Thomson, secretary of Congress, emphasizing the fact that the usual causes for revolution, such as cruelty, dungeons, and scaffolds, had been lacking among the causes leading up to the war.

On May 16, he wrote his brother Simeon that he had not talked his views in public or private but he could not disguise his fears that the change in the temper of the Americans since 1775, the falling off of able men from Congress, the heavy expenses, and the refusal of European nations to receive our ambassadors, were doleful prophecies of the future.

Of the temper of Congress, Deane could speak out of his own experience; its caliber had not improved: Franklin and John Adams were abroad, Washington was in the army, Dickinson did not



return until late in 1779; Mason, Wythe, Jefferson, Nicholas, and Pendleton were no longer members.

Congress had reduced the value of currency to zero; its prominent members caballed against Washington in the fearful winter of 1777-8; it did nothing for the soldiers in Valley Forge, at a time when Washington said that America was on the brink of destruction.

Deane doubts whether a democracy will secure the longed-for blessings, he fears that wealth and power will tend toward selfishness and faction.

He imagines all sorts of disasters in case we fail, and thinks some action toward an honorable reconciliation should be taken before the country strikes Scylla or Charybdis.

Then he rehearses the story of his own woes, and, speaking of his misfortunes, says: "I can neither think nor write without dwelling on it. It lies down with me at night. It rises with me in the morning. I take up my pen and resolve not to write about it, but before a page is written I have referred to it."

That the letter was strictly personal, and not to be used to influence others, he adds: "I hope this letter will come safe to your hands; let no extracts or copies be made of it."

A letter of May 10, to James Wilton of Philadelphia, gives nothing we have not already noticed.

On May 20, he wrote a long letter to Jesse Root of Philadelphia, in which he explained his change of opinion: noisy, designing men had risen from the lowest order to places of authority; the government was poorly administered; anarchy, licentiousness, and violence prevail even in Congress; faction, cabal, and private interests too often vanquish reason, patriotism, and justice.

More alarming is the depravity of morals; encouraged by the laws making a depreciated currency a legal tender; grasping the rewards of dishonesty offered those in debt, greater injustice has been done than ever before among any people.

To Deane, brooding over these and other sources of gloom, there emerged two propositions: there is no probability of independency; if established, it would prove a curse. America grows weaker, England stronger, France more wary; freedom of legislation and commerce are delusive dreams under anarchy and tumult already rife among the colonies.

Hostilities already prevail between Virginia and Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. England has often interposed to save the civil and religious liberties of other countries against

France and Spain; it will be better to have England as our friend than either of these.

Deane uses considerable ingenuity to explain how we can avoid breaking our faith with France, by reconciliation with England, by showing that France indicates that she will feel at liberty to take a similar course if we are not successful.

He quotes Franklin's earlier zeal to maintain the union with the British Empire and says, that since the causes for the civil war have ceased by the rescinding of obnoxious laws, we would do well to return to the country to which we are bound by ties of religion, laws, manners, and language.

In a letter to Major Benjamin Tallmadge, written May 20, he urges him to let no copies or extracts be made of it. Had he taken counsel of a fear which we can easily read between the lines, and refrained from sending it and its companions, how different might have been his later years!

On June 10, Deane wrote his old friend Robert Morris a letter, which gives nothing we have not read in the other dreary epistles.

Four days later, a letter to Gen. S. H. Parsons contains sentences, which would not have been written could Deane have looked forward to the splendid service of De Grasse at Yorktown:

The French fleet cannot reach you till August or later, and little can be expected this summer. Nothing is more evident than that the present object of France and Spain is to waste the forces of Britain at the expense of America. If we gain independence, we shall be fortunate, if disputes do not carry us into civil war.

Such is the gloomy view of a discouraged man, whose credit was gone, whose integrity was impugned, whose pocket was empty, as he brooded month after month and year after year, far from his country, of whose fortunes he had heard such conflicting reports, for whose future it was easy for him to fear the worst.

There is no evidence that Deane had any correspondence with any officers of the British Government. He wrote those letters to personal friends in America, unburdening his heart, which had grown weary with the weight of injustice, disgrace and poverty. In two at least of the letters, he charged the readers to allow no copies to be made of them.

It is the cry of a desponding man, not of a traitor. We may accuse him of lack of faith in his country, weakness, and loss of courage; we may say that his republicanism weakened, but we cannot justly charge him with treason.

## CHAPTER XII

### DEANE AN EXILE IN HOLLAND

THE experiences of Deane in the autumn of 1781 were discouraging in the extreme. Very different were the fortunes of America with Washington, Lafayette, Rochambeau, and De Grasse gathering their forces to crush Cornwallis, and close the war. On September 13, the day before Washington arrived at Yorktown to take command of the armies of France and America, Deane wrote his brother Barnabas, as was mentioned earlier, that he was ill with fever and depression, but he was planning soon to meet his son in Ghent, where he intended to pass the autumn.

My patience is exhausted [he writes] and my affairs ruined by the unexampled conduct of Congress who have detained me here—it is now more than a year—waiting for the appointment of an auditor to settle my accounts, which, in reality, I believe they never wish, or desire to have settled.

On September 19, at the time when Washington with Rochambeau, Chastellux, and Knox were conferring with De Grasse on his flagship *Ville*

*de Paris*, concerning the coming battle, Deane was writing his friend James Wilson of the failure of his venture with masts and land sales.

Its being known [he writes] that a merchant has made, or is about to make, any considerable venture to America is of itself sufficient to hurt his credit in France. For myself almost everything I depended upon when I left America has failed. I built great hopes on the mast contracts and had good right to do so at the time. I was persuaded that something might be done with lands. I had confidence that Congress, after suffering me to be calumniated as a public defaulter, and in effect treating me as such themselves, would certainly have an auditor appointed; I was deceived also in this.

On September 26, Deane wrote his brother Barnabas a depressing letter.

There is no talk of peace at present; you will say I am a Cassandra, prophesying evil only. I cannot help it, our credit is so low no goods can be bought without cash on unquestioned European security. I know no merchant in France who has not lost by America, and too many are totally ruined. I confess the gloomy prospect has made me exceedingly unhappy, and makes me fear that public, as well as private, tranquillity will be unknown in our country during our lives.

On September 26, he wrote John Jay complaining of the newspapers for coupling him with

Duane and Arnold, and thinks "licentiousness in stigmatizing men in public trust with the vilest and most abusive epithets a fatal symptom of universal anarchy, more to be dreaded than the monarchy at the door."

On October 20, he wrote from Ghent to Benjamin Tallmadge of his fear that at the close of the war America will feel the despotic weight of the French army which will then number thirty thousand veterans.

On October 21, Deane wrote his brother that he feared that an earlier letter had been intercepted; he had learned that it and other letters had been published in New York. It was disagreeable to have them come out, but he was not sorry to have all America informed of his sentiments, and of the grounds on which they were founded. He adds, "I have seen nothing to alter my way of thinking." This is plucky, though a little reckless, but there is no symptom here of anything traitorous.

On October 21, he wrote Jonathan Trumbull: "No nation ever preserved its liberty after admitting a superior army of foreign mercenaries to fight its battles. The name of Independent States will not counterbalance the miseries and distresses of present and future burdens."

On November 1, R. R. Livingston wrote John

Jay from Philadelphia: "As I know the confidence you once had in Deane I must caution you against having any communication with him; some letters, said to be his, have been furnished by Rivington, which, being compared with others received here, have marks of authenticity."

A little later, Jeremiah Wadsworth wrote Deane of the gloomy picture his letters presented two days before in Rivington's New York *Royal Gazette*; he said he had nothing to reply to all these assertions as they were founded on false information, despondency, and mistakes.

Your old enemies pronounce you an apostate, and boldly assert that you are paid by Great Britain, and that before this you are in England. Your friends, whose distress is extreme from your letters, hope that the cold hand of despair, which was on you, caused you to see everything with a jaundiced eye. Before you receive this, I will hope that you have recovered your spirits and obtained a better knowledge of our affairs, and have retracted your mistaken opinions.

On November 11, Barnabas Deane, in a letter to Jacob Sebor, refers to the "intercepted letters," and says Deane's enemies are freely coupling his name with Arnold's, adding, "I am more surprised at his imprudence at writing so freely than at any other action of his life. He has now given



his enemies just the opportunity they wanted to ruin him."

The same month, Deane wrote Edward Bancroft a letter full of anxiety and distress over the "intercepted letters."

I never could imagine [he says] that my attachment to the true interests of my country could be questioned. Still, things in America would be happier and we would enjoy greater liberties, subject to England. Fully convinced of this, my natural opinions and temper led me to say so to many Americans, who set themselves to misreport or exaggerate every expression of mine, and represent me as an enemy of my country and a partisan of British tyranny.

He refers to the British taking important letters from a vessel.

This [he says] gives me the greatest uneasiness lest mine should be among them; for, though I neither expected nor required that my friends should keep their contents secret from our countrymen in public characters, yet should they be communicated to them through the English papers from New York, such a circumstance would fill the utmost measure of my misfortune. I can easily foresee the consequences; but should they prove ten times worse than I at present imagine, apprehensive as I naturally am, they will have no effect on me with regard to my attachment to my country and its liberties.

To be obnoxious to that country which I once gloried in as the common parent of myself and fellow-

citizens, for having been among the first to resist usurpation, and at the same time to become suspected where I have experienced so much politeness and hospitality, and to be represented in my own country as its enemy, is too much.

One sees here the agony of a man who is advancing still further into misery. He adds: "I will neither anticipate misfortune nor sink under it, while health and spirits remain with me, but for the past ten days both have threatened to leave me."

What sleepless nights, what vain regrets, what restless tossings, what burdened hours are here suggested! He goes on to speak of the rigid economy he is obliged to practise.

This is the place to introduce an account of an interview which Elkanah Watson had with Deane in November, 1781. Watson says:

On my return from Brussels I called on the once celebrated Silas Deane at Ghent. I found him a voluntary exile, misanthropic in his feelings, intent on getting money, and deadly hostile to his native land. I felt constrained on my return to Paris to announce to Franklin my conviction that Deane must be regarded an enemy alike to France and America. He observed to me that similar representations had reached him, but he was unwilling to admit their truth.

Later, Watson revised this opinion, saying, "Such at the time were my impressions and the opinions I formed of Deane, I owe it to truth and justice to record his vindication from these strictures by a potent pen, that of John Trumbull, the brilliant author of *McFingal*, to whose criticism I submitted the compilation of my manuscript." He expressed the following views in a letter dated January, 1823:

Silas Deane [you say] among other things was a deadly enemy of his native land, but ambition, not avarice, was his ruling passion. In his early transactions at the Court of France, as the political and commercial agent of Congress, he rendered important service to his country, but, exceeding his powers, he made his recall necessary. Exasperated by the cool reception, and the delay in settling the account, he became engaged in a controversy with many of the most influential members of Congress. Defeated in many of his purposes, he repaired again to France, where he found his political reputation lost with the loss of his official character. The publication of letters charging the French Court with intrigue and duplicity made him obnoxious there, and drove him into voluntary exile. He lived in the Netherlands dissatisfied, exasperated, and reduced almost to penury. Thus forced into an unnatural and friendless residence in foreign countries, he gave himself up to rage, resentment, and actual despair, and vented his passion in execrations against France, America, and mankind.

In this condition you found him. He considered himself as a man, not only abused and ill requited for his important services, but denied those pecuniary emoluments which had been promised him for his agency in Europe.

This bears the marks of candor and good judgment; neither Watson nor Trumbull accepted as true, reports, flying through the air, that Deane was in the pay of the British Ministry.

There is a note by Lord North bearing upon this matter, dated March 3, 1781, in which he says: "I think Deane should have three thousand pounds, in goods for America. The giving him particular instructions would be liable to much hazard, but his bringing any of the provinces to offer to return to their allegiance on the former foot would be much better than by joint coöperation through Congress."

There is nothing in this to incriminate Deane. There was a fund upon which ministers could draw for purposes of bribery, but there is no evidence that Deane received a shilling. All that can be proved from the above letter is the fact that Deane's unhappiness was known to Lord North, who would naturally regard him as possibly an easy mark.

We have a letter of King George of the date, August 7, 1781, which is as follows:

The letter Lord North has wrote to Sir Henry Clinton on the subject of the intercepted letters from Deane, he is transmitting to him, is very proper, and is the most likely means of rendering them of utility. I own I think them too strong in our favor to bear the appearance of his spontaneous opinion, but that, if suspected to be authentic, they will see that they have by concert fallen into our hands. The means Deane should have taken as most conducive to the object he seems now to favor would have been, first, to have shown that the hands of the French are too full to be able to give solid assistance to America, and to have pointed out the ruin that must attend the further continuance of the war.

So far as this shows anything it shows that Deane had not endeavored in any deliberate, or in any passionate or ill-considered way, to play into the hands of the English and invite bribes from the British Ministry.

Charles Isham says that there is no convincing evidence that Deane was in the pay of the English, or was promised pay, when he wrote the "intercepted letters." So extreme was his spondency, and so bitter was his language after he returned to Paris that he was regarded by the English as a person who might serve the British interests. Possibly some English agent suggested to him that a commercial partnership would be available by him without intimation of a bribe,

but the extravagance with which Deane overshot the mark, as King George himself says, is the reverse of the spirit of a man bidding for English gold. Deane sought no bribes; his letters are the outflow of keen despair, and contain the convictions of a mind distorted by mistakes, discouragements, and mania.

When Bancroft learned of their publication, he wrote back in terms of regret, and complete ignorance that his friend was in the pay of the British Government. Had Deane been treasonable, Bancroft was the most natural channel of communication with the English, and he could best have arranged the details. The business offered by Lord North came to nothing. There is an allusion of the king regarding Deane's sincerity, to be interpreted in favor of his integrity, which is as follows: "I quite agree with Lord North that the retreat of Mr. Deane to Ghent shows that his conduct is sincere." Deane never incriminated himself as a bribe-taker with his relatives or intimates.

The "intercepted letters" offered a rich field to Tom Paine and other bitter enemies. Paine quotes with relish the remark of a man who pretended to be loyal to Deane, "My old friend Duer says, 'Deane is a damned artful rascal.' "

Benjamin Tallmadge wrote Deane, December 28, 1781, that he was often spoken of as a traitor, a disappointed statesman, laboring under the just censures of his country, till the malice of thwarted pride and ambition drove him to the dreadful step.

Meanwhile Deane was living in his cheap room with his son, taking meals at a plain boarding house. On December 21, he writes Frederick Grand that he was very ill. Three days later, he writes that he has a dry cough and can sleep but little. He hears from Barclay, whom Congress appointed to examine his accounts, that he has no orders to close them.

On March 4, 1782, Franklin wrote Livingston, that there was no doubt about the genuineness of the "intercepted letters." He says:

Deane's conversation, since his return from America, has gone gradually more and more into that style, and at length he came to an open vindication of Arnold's conduct. He resides at Ghent, distressed both in mind and circumstances; he raves, and writes abundantly, and I imagine that it will end in his going over to join his friend Arnold in England. I had an exceedingly good opinion of him when he acted with me, and I believe that he was sincere and hearty in our cause; but he is changed, and his character ruined in his own country and in this, so I see no other but England to which he can now retire.



He did not go to England for a year, and wise as the great philosopher was, for once he was mistaken; moreover, Franklin's reference to Deane's "friend Arnold" was undeserved, as we shall see in the next chapter. .

On March 30, 1782, Franklin wrote Morris from Paris: "Our former friend, Deane, has lost himself entirely, and he and his letters are universally condemned. He cannot well return hither, and I think hardly to America. I see no place for him but England. He continues, however, to sit croaking at Ghent, chagrined, discontented, and dispirited."

A letter from Deane to Franklin, bearing the date of May 13, 1782, can scarcely be called a "croaking letter" though it is discouraging and passionate. After thanking Franklin for urging Congress to settle his accounts, he sets forth his opinion that an independent democracy in alliance with the House of Bourbon would conduce less to peace and happiness than to be under the British constitution with abuses reformed. He adds:

It is cruel and unjust in us to treat each other as enemies on this account. I have not betrayed any public trust, I have freely condemned the conduct of Arnold, as freely as I from the first condemned that of



those violent demagogues, who improved every circumstance and accident of his life to push him into desperate measures. My case, therefore, in every point of view, differs from his; I have neither correspondence nor interest, nor the prospect of any in Great Britain. The small remainder of my fortune, the most of my friends and family, and all my future hopes and prospects are in America. I have therefore every motive to make me wish for the liberty and happiness of my country, and I can with great sincerity declare, that if America, on experiment, shall find herself happier and more free under the present system than she ever was or could expect to be under the other, however modified or reformed, I shall rejoice to find I have judged erroneously, and that I have both written and spoken at least imprudently on the subject.

A letter from Beaumarchais to Morris written June 3, 1782, shows how cordial was his confidence in Deane:

I address to you [he says] a faithful abstract of my accounts as they have been settled by Mr. Deane with whom alone, on behalf of the General Congress, I treated. His misfortunes, the malice with which his character, naturally mild and uniform, has been aspersed, and the complaints which I have heard in this country against certain of his writings, have not changed the opinion I formed of him. I will always do him the justice to say that he is one of those men who have contributed most to the alliance of France with the United States. I will even add that his

laudable endeavors in the most difficult times merited perhaps another recommendation. I see there are intrigues among Republicans as well as in the courts of kings. This digression, a compassionate feeling for a man worthy of a better lot, forces from me, in writing to you, sir, who have loved him as I do.

The abuse to which Deane was exposed in the newspapers is suggested by a certificate of Franklin published about this time as follows:

Since certain paragraphs in English papers impute that Silas Deane had sometime after his first arrival in France purchased in that kingdom thirty thousand muskets, and that he gave three livres for each, being old, condemned arms; that he had them cleaned and vamped up at a cost of three livres more; and that for each of these he charged and received a louis d'or, and that he also committed similar frauds in the purchase of other articles for the use of his country, I think it my duty, in compliance with his request, to certify and declare that the paragraph in question, according to my best knowledge and belief, is entirely false, and that I have never known or suspected any cause to charge said Silas Deane with any want of probity in any purchase or any bargain whatsoever.

How sweeping and reckless were the charges appears from a quotation from a letter from William Lee to Samuel Thorpe, dated January 17, 1783, as follows: "A correspondent has seen

the publication in America in which Franklin is publicly charged as deep in the mire as Deane."

The exile wrote John Jay, February 10, 1782, of his straitened circumstances, his being forced to contract debts for his support, which would not have been necessary could he have visited London, from which he was debarred through fear of creating prejudice; that he had been struggling to keep himself above the extremes of personal want and indigence; that he had been calumniated in America as a defaulter, grown rich out of public moneys, and this by those who had it at all times in their power to convict, and to make a public example of him had they found him guilty on a trial, to which he presented himself and for which he solicited; that his accounts had been before Congress for a year; and a year and a half before, when Barclay, who had been appointed auditor, wrote for instructions, he was told he was not to have any concern about the affair. In the words of Deane:

If my enemies believed one word of what they asserted and professed against me for five years past in America, would they hesitate one moment to bring me to trial? If Congress thought there were any grounds for the charges, would they be so unjust to their constituents as to refuse all examination?

Deane's exile is made more bitter by the fact that his letters are intercepted; his brother had not heard from him for over a year, though many letters had been written, and he knew they reached America. He wrote Barnabas February 10, 1783:

Unhappily my letters, as well as everything<sup>n</sup>else belonging to me, have been regarded as free plunder by both parties. I hope to be able to go to London in a few days, and shall recover sufficient out of an old balance due me to answer my more pressing demands.

He had stayed away from London to avoid giving further advantage to his enemies. He urges his brother to sell all his property, real and personal, and remit the proceeds to him; he expresses his willingness to have his accounts examined and decided upon by any disinterested merchants or bankers in Paris, and says that the balance due him is sixty thousand dollars.

On February 10, 1783, he wrote Edward Bancroft that he would like to visit Paris, if he were not liable to meet disagreeable words or actions, of which he had had sufficient. As he thinks of the good friends in Paris he longs to see, his mind goes back two years, to the time when he wrote the fatal letters, and he says:

I wrote freely, and I confess unguardedly, my sentiments on our affairs at a very gloomy period.

It is no way extraordinary that my mind should be affected at the dangerous situation in which I then viewed everything dear to me to be in, nor that my pen should express the feelings of my heart, nor that I did not foresee events then unexpected by everyone; but an error in judgment is not a crime. Could the public view the letters of men of high station at that time to their friends on both sides of the water, mine would not appear to be the only desponding or criminal ones.

On February 22, Jay wrote Deane from Paris a letter which must have wrung the heart of the exile. "I was your friend, and should still have been so," he said, "had you not advised America to desert that independence which they had pledged each other their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to support."

A little solace mingles in the bitter cup, as he says: "The charges against you of peculation undoubtedly called for strict and speedy inquiry; but I expected that you would make a satisfactory defense against them—I hope so still." Speaking of his desire to visit England, he says: "To my knowledge you are suspected of being in British interests. . . . As circumstances press your going, probably you will venture; let me advise you to be prudent and cautious what company you keep, and what conversations you hold

in that country." This was good counsel for a man so inclined to talk as Deane was. Then follows what we may regard as a fairly correct explanation of Deane's unfortunate "intercepted letters."

I write thus plainly and fully, because I still indulge the idea that your head may have been more to blame than your heart, and that in some melancholy despondent hour the disorder of your nerves affected your opinions and your pen. God grant this may have proved to have been the case, and that I may yet have reason to resume my former opinion, that you were a valuable, a virtuous, and a patriotic man.

Deane himself came to regard this reasoning of his friend Jay as a true explanation of his folly. Writing February 28, to M. LeRay Chaumont, he says he hopes the peace

will settle people's minds, and that an individual will not be regarded as an enemy, because in an hour of despondency and apprehension for his country, he imprudently attempted to warn his countrymen of what he thought their danger.

It is true I wrote many letters to America on what appeared at the time the dangerous and critical situation of my country; it is true I wrote them to my private friends for their information; it is equally true that some of those letters were basely betrayed and that others were intercepted and published in New York, not to serve Great Britain so much as to injure

me, and for that purpose some of them were altered in many parts, and the whole placed in the most unfavorable light.

Though I am ready to acknowledge that I was misinformed and misled in some, and even in many things, and that I was imprudent to write or speak at all on the subject, yet as a free citizen I had a free right to do both.

On February 28, Deane replied to Jay's pointed but friendly counsel, explaining the gloom in which he wrote the "intercepted letters," adding:

Unfortunately I am not blessed with that gay and sanguine disposition which leadeth the happy possessor of it to hope and to believe all things whatsoever they wish for. In such a situation, and with such feelings, it was not possible for me, if I wrote or spoke at all, not to express some sentiments tinged by the gloom before me. I am not about to justify the part I took; nay, I confess that when I bring it to the bar of prudence I am among the first to condemn it; but I cannot bring myself to regard an imprudent and a criminal action as the same. I do not either justify or wholly excuse my conduct; but I must be that traitor to myself, which God knows I never was to my country, should I subscribe to that condemnation so outrageously pressed on me by many of my countrymen. When I am charged with being in the British interests, it is implied and generally understood as being in British pay, but can anything give a stronger contradiction to this than the part I have acted both before and since writing those letters, and the dis-



tressed situation in which I have lingered out a wretched and obscure exile in this place?

For almost eighteen months past I have lived in lodgings barely decent, without a servant, and dined at an ordinary, a style of living which you well know I am neither accustomed nor inclined to, and to which necessity alone could ever reduce me—a hard necessity indeed—for without this rigid economy I must, with an only son, of whom I have the right to promise quite the reverse, have been reduced to the extremes of want; and what has embittered even this scanty subsistence (as if I had not only a sufficient portion of gall in my cup), I have owed the greatest part of it to a friend in Paris, who generously lent me money, still unpaid. I was never in England, neither have I intimate or stated correspondents in that country; I am personally unknown to any one, both of the old and the present administration, except a casual acquaintance with Lord Shelburne, Mr. Townsend, and Mr. Fox in 1776, at a dinner at a friend's house in Paris, may be called a personal acquaintance.

Referring to Jay's statement that the charges of peculation called for strict and speedy inquiry, Deane said that for three years he had solicited an investigation; that, while it was not in his power to force Congress to action, it had been in their power to ruin him by blasting his character with their vague and general insinuations, and denying him the only possible means to justify himself to them and before the world. He quotes



Franklin's assertion of two months before that he never had the least cause to suspect his fidelity in money transactions for the public.

Referring to the possible alternative of publishing the state of the case in the papers, he says that this would have only thrown him back on the tempestuous ocean of newspaper litigation and abuse into which he once suffered himself to be driven, and in which he had been shipwrecked. "The bare mention of my name," he says, "in a newspaper was, as I know and have lately experienced, sufficient to set scribblers to work to abuse me; and the torments of a contest of this kind are like the torments of hell, endless, and to increase them the sufferer must ever be in bad company." With returning peace and tranquillity he hopes for justice; he does not look for public office, but only hopes to wipe off the aspersion cast on his character, and to convince the world that he merits in some degree the former opinion his friends held of him.

So runs the dreary story of Deane's exile in Ghent, where for nearly a year and a half he lived in poverty, in cheap lodgings, taking his meals at a public eating-house. The presence of his son was company for him, if not a comfort, as the youth's health was not strong, and the father

felt keenly the shadow which his misfortunes cast upon his boy.

He had abundant time to review the whole situation, and eat his heart out with vain regret over his imprudence in allowing his despondency to direct his pen, and thus put into the hands of his enemies materials for completing his downfall. It must have been a relief to embark for London, for he cherished the hope which proved to be vain, of securing a balance due him there.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ISOLATION, POVERTY, AND MISERY IN ENGLAND

THE first token of Deane's presence in England is in a letter written April 1, 1783, to his brother Simeon, in which he said that after being delayed by illness in Ghent, he had come to London, where he purposed to stay only long enough to settle an old account and send to America his son, who was then ill with a return of the disorder which had affected him in his infancy. He says: "It is a gloomy reflection to think that the son may be as unfortunate in his health as the father in his fortunes; but I submit, and I flatter myself with some degree of philosophic fortitude, to ills which I can neither prevent nor avoid."

It is a satisfaction to see that Deane did something besides brood over his misfortunes. He advises the lawmakers of Connecticut to use their influence to liquidate and apportion the public debt without loss of time, and let each state take its portion and manage its own revenue.

Robert Morris had long been struggling with that problem as Superintendent of Finance, but his urgent appeals and arguments were, as he said, "like preaching to the dead." Deane's good business head appears in his remark: "The great object of Congress is to make a common treasury, to be supplied by imposts and duties laid by themselves, and collected and disposed of by officers of their appointing."

On the same date as the above, he wrote James Wilson that his mercantile endeavors had all failed, he had tried in vain to sell lands in Illinois, to pick up broken fragments of fortune in various quarters and begin anew, but in all his discouragements he was sustained by a "firm belief in a superintending Providence."

A week later he wrote his brother Barnabas that his son Jesse was miserably weak and low, and an incision had been made in his neck.

In July, he wrote Barnabas that he was planning to send his son to America, though he feared he would never be well; his business ventures had come to nothing; of forty thousand dollars he had left in M. Chaumont's hands, nothing could be recovered from the bankrupt. Reviewing his long series of misfortunes, he speaks of the combination of the discouragements which beset

him and of the gloomy letters received in the spring of 1781, when he wrote the "intercepted letters." Overwhelmed by trials, he had stayed in exile and obscurity in Ghent rather than expose himself to the censures, persecutions, and malignant shafts of his enemies; but he could not escape, for in all the English papers paragraphs were inserted declaring that he had defrauded his country of large sums and fled from justice. Within three weeks of his coming to London, he was set upon by a lot of mischievous scribblers, who renewed the attack.

Benedict Arnold called upon him at once, went to his room unannounced, and a remembrance of past personal civilities and hospitality restrained Deane from closing the door in his face, but he declined Arnold's invitation to dine at his house in company with gentlemen of rank and character. The next day, Deane changed his lodgings, but Arnold found where he was, and went up again unannounced, when Deane told his unwelcome visitor frankly not to visit him, and that he could not regard him in the same light as formerly and he "had not seen Arnold since, except passing in his coach." One morning a London paper said, "Yesterday Mr. Deane had a long interview with Lord North." The next

morning, "Mr. Deane was at the Duke of Portland's levee, dined with Mr. Fox," etc., etc.

The fact is [writes Deane] I have never seen any of these ministers except at a distance in the House of Commons or in the park, nor do I know any of them even by sight, except it be Lord North and Mr. Fox, whose figures are such that once seen they must ever afterward be known.

The key of this chronic animosity Deane thinks he discovers in the fact, that as soon as the preliminaries of peace had been signed, Americans hastened to England from all parts of Europe, with the sanguine expectation that British ports and stores of merchandise would be open to them, and that they might obtain whatever they wanted, but they were disappointed in every quarter for merchants in America still owed the English dealers two million pounds. The cause for failure was imputed to Deane's advice, which influenced the counsels of the English cabinet.

In a letter to Franklin of October 19, 1783, Deane explains the situation more fully. He says he accidentally became acquainted with Lord Suffield, and answered his inquiries in a conversation in the presence of Sir Robert Harris. Lord Suffield was writing a pamphlet on the commercial relations of England and America. Deane by no

means sympathized with the position of Lord Suffield, and never talked with him without taking the opposite side. "Yet such has been my fate," he writes Franklin, "that simply from my intimacy with him, I have had those arguments and principles, which I opposed, attributed to me." Lord Suffield's object was to secure to England the carrying trade, and to preserve the Navigation Act from being in any way altered. Deane insisted that the carrying could not, beyond a certain degree, be retained by England, and that the Navigation Act was a wise measure in its time, but had gone out of date.

Deane never lost the affection and confidence of Beaumarchais, and in a letter of November 3, 1783, he wrote him:

You say that, from the reports of my friends, you apprehend that my misfortunes have affected my spirits, and turned me toward a melancholy state, against which you cautioned me. I thank you for your advice, but shall be doubly obliged to you for a prescription to prevent that fatal, soul-annihilating disorder. Indeed, I am not gay, I am not naturally so inclined; and it is now some years since I have had anything to dispel gloom and excite gayety. I have at times been very low in spirits, my health has suffered from it, but I still survive, though lately very ill, and still so weak as to be confined to my chamber; but a consciousness of integrity supports me; I hold

it fast, and like good old Job, neither man nor devil shall ever make me let it go. The painful recollection of ingratitude it is not in the power of medicine to expel. I would not change my situation with my enemies; I have been guilty of many errors and weaknesses, but never of infidelity to my trust, or of ingratitude, or injustice to my fellow men.

On the same day as the above he wrote his brother Simeon, explaining that his complaint for not hearing from his exiled brother was not because of any neglect on his part; he had written twenty times, he says:

I have lived to see such things, that I am surprised at nothing. Though I have become almost callous to reproach, and inured to misfortune, and to the treacherous conduct of pretended friends, yet I have struggled hard during a gloomy exile in a gloomy country, to keep my spirits from entirely deserting me; and these struggles have at times greatly affected my health.

No set of men were ever guilty of greater meanness and cruelty in intercepting the correspondence of absent friends. This cruelty has been wanton; for, since the publishing of my unfortunate letters, I have not hinted at politics in any of my correspondence.

You wish to know my plans; I really have none. I am quite at sea, without compass or friendly star to direct my course. My frail and ill-provided bark must still drive as chance or accident impels.

I begin to regard my demand on Congress as desperate; they have long since wanted both the will and the ability to do justice to those who saved them.



That Deane was passing into a healthier mood appears in his references to his study of machines, especially of stationary steam engines for manufacturing purposes, with a view of introducing them into America.

A singular pathos attaches to this period, from the fact that he barely failed of an interview with a man he esteemed above almost all others, whose good will he longed for,—John Jay; to whom he wrote from his Fleet Street lodgings on November 4, 1783, that he had been held back by illness from calling on him, and when he called Jay was gone. "I am anxious for one hour's conversation with you," he wrote.

In a letter to Thomas Barclay of November 7, he reviews his accounts, says he has vouchers for almost everything, and pleads for an order for a part at least of the money due him.

On the same day, he wrote Franklin concerning the reports circulating to his disadvantage, saying that he had improved every opportunity to have the restraint on commerce in the West Indies removed or moderated.

On November 3, 1783, Deane issued an address to the people of the United States, having sent the copy of it over by his son Jesse. He reviews the three years' misfortune and exile, and says

the two charges against him are, first, that he is guilty of fraud and speculation in the management of public moneys; second, that after his return to France in 1781, he wrote letters from interested motives, and with a base and treacherous desire to injure his country, having previously engaged in the interests of her enemies. He insists that a man with his character and standing, up to the time of his going to Europe in the spring of 1776, should not be condemned without a hearing.

After most of the contracts for stores and ships had been completed, there came to him, early in 1778, the call of Congress that he should return and report on the state of affairs in Europe. Advised by Vergennes and Franklin to keep the recall a secret, he could not in the complicated state of affairs, having had dealings with widely scattered men, and forwarding goods secretly, make up his accounts at a few days' notice. Had he attempted to do so, it would have defeated the secrecy which he was advised to observe.

Though he had received no intimation from any letter from Congress of dissatisfaction with his management, he was aware that his fellow-commissioner, Arthur Lee, was a jealous and artful enemy, and that Lee was in correspondence with leading men in America; therefore he was

anxious to delay his return until all accounts were settled and closed, but yielding his judgment, he set sail, taking from Grand, the banker, a statement of all the moneys received or paid out on the account of the United States. With this and the testimonials of the king, the minister, and his colleague and intimate friend, Franklin, as to this zeal and integrity, he had no fear of censure for lack of vouchers in detail; but the venomous pen of Lee had poisoned the minds of public men beyond anything he had imagined, by insinuating that he had become immensely rich in public service, and consequently that he must have been guilty of dishonesty, and, though summoned home to report on the state of European affairs, his first audience with Congress was after six weeks' attendance and solicitation. He then gave a verbal statement and asked, that if there was any charge against him, he might be heard in explanation and defense; he was not told of any, and though Congress appeared in no way dissatisfied with his conduct, and the settlement of public and private affairs pressed him to return, he could not obtain any resolution of Congress either to approve or disapprove, or another hearing until late in December, though he asked almost every day for another audience.

In December, he gave a written narrative, and Congress appointed a committee, which did not give him an audience or ask him a question. The committee studiously evaded every opportunity to get information or hear explanation.

During more than fourteen months of stay in Philadelphia, Deane had only two audiences with Congress, and not one with the committee specially appointed.

In December, 1778, finding that there was a party determined on his ruin, which had sufficient influence to prevent all examination, and to bear him down by the most mortifying delay and neglect, he issued his first address to the public through the newspapers; this led Congress to give him a hearing and appoint the committee. The papers took up the matter in the most outrageous and abusive way, and Deane made no reply to their lies, but kept urging Congress and the committee to give him a hearing. From December, 1778, to August, 1779, he wrote Congress more than thirty letters humbly petitioning for a public examination and trial; they never took the least notice of his requests. Through private conversations with the members, he learned that the only difficulty lay in the fact that his accounts were unsettled. To obviate this, Deane returned

to France with an assurance from Congress that it would empower a man to settle the accounts, but when that officer was appointed, his powers were so limited that he declined to act. Deane wrote immediately to Congress asking for more ample power for the auditor. Twelve months of heavy expense went by, with a vague charge of default over him, and no word came from Congress until November, 1781, when he learned of the appointment of Thomas Barclay as consul, but Barclay told Deane he had received no instructions.

Soon after this came the mortification of the publishing of the "intercepted letters" of May and June. Proscribed, obnoxious, exiled, he still waited for Congress, which had had his accounts over eighteen months; it was over five years since he had money or employment from the public. He says: "Has any fraud been detected? Had I been guilty of any, would not my enemies have published it, instead of charging me generally of being a defaulter of uncalculated millions?" Ought not the written statements of Franklin in 1778, and again in 1782, as to his ability, faithfulness, and honesty, to have some weight?

He reviews his whole career in Europe, shows how he managed the difficult task of forwarding

supplies, with the French government vacillating, English officers alert, and little money, yet in November, 1776, two hundred brass cannon and mortars, thirty thousand fusils, with ammunition, clothing, and tents for as many men, were at the ports ready for the ships, which were there to receive them, and after the most positive orders given by the Court forbidding the sailing of the ships, two vessels, the *Amphitrite* and *Mercure*, were got to sea under pretense of sailing to San Domingo, and these carried large military supplies to Portsmouth in April, 1777; and when General Burgoyne capitulated, his army was surrounded by men armed with the fusils and supported by artillery sent over in these vessels.

The victory at Saratoga led France to conclude a treaty with America, and in a great degree decided the independence of the United States.

He quotes Beaumarchais' letter of March 23, 1778, in which he assures Congress that if the money, stores, and merchandise have been of any use to America, the gratitude of the country is due "to the indefatigable pains Deane had taken through the whole transaction."

We look with special interest to Deane's explanation of the "intercepted letters" of 1781: the news from America was gloomy, the British

forces were in possession of the whole seacoast from the Chesapeake southward; they ravaged and distressed the country; their ships intercepted our trade; America had no fleet; Washington's army was too weak for offensive operation: Congress had neither money nor credit; Washington declared "that without a decidedly superior fleet to that of Great Britain in America, all opposition to the British forces would soon be at an end." All letters from America were in this style.

My letters were published [he adds sadly], others not. I then thought that a reunion, not simply on the condition of being replaced in the state in which we were previous to 1763 (for which alone Congress in 1774, and in 1775, petitioned), but on terms every way preferable; namely, to be governed solely by laws of our own enacting, taxed by our own assemblies, and of enjoying the same commercial privileges and protection as other members of the British Empire—a condition preferable to that of war, hazarding the experiment of independent sovereignty. This opinion which I gave my friends was regarded as little short of high treason.

COMMONS  
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The first and second Continental Congresses petitioned for a restoration to the former conditions of "law, loyalty, faith, and blood."

Soon afterward Franklin drew up several resolutions declaring that the idea that "we aim

at independence and the abolition of the Navigation Act is groundless."

After the Declaration of Independence was issued, Franklin, with the approval of Congress, wrote to Lord Howe, July 30, 1776: "Long did I endeavor to preserve from breaking the British Empire, for I knew that once broken, perfect reunion of the parts could not be hoped for."

"Was it a crime for me," wrote Deane, "in 1781, to wish for a perfect reunion, and in private urge my friends to promote the event which Dr. Franklin had most devoutly wished?"

Three fourths of the ships sailing from the United States had been captured, the paper of Congress was not passed at any rate; General Washington said that without aid from France to pay the troops, and a fleet superior to the British, all opposition would end with that campaign. The whole of the naval force ordered by France that season to the West Indies and America was not equal to the British. De Grasse was first ordered to the West Indies, thence to the Continent, but as more than four hundred sail of the French merchant ships would need convoy from the West Indies, it was given out in France that previous to sailing northward, a part of De Grasse's fleet would attend the merchant ships.



No one at the time would expect that the Count would take every French ship of war with him, or that Cornwallis would fix on one of the most unfavorable positions of the country for defense, or that General Clinton would allow Washington and Rochambeau to march without opposition to Virginia, or that several British ships would remain in the West Indies, thereby making the French force superior to the British.

In that critical time, that dangerous situation, the unfortunate letters were written, and distorted in the publication.

It is needless to say that this appeal made little difference with the attitude of the country toward Deane. The damaging, the insuperable fact which stood in his way was that his accounts with Congress were unsettled, and the inference gathered, even by considerate men, was that there was good reason for the hostility of Congress.

The correspondence of Deane and Jay at this period is painful; the former was eager to meet the latter, and extremely sensitive to his opinion. Any delay of the latter in writing increased Deane's misery. The culmination of agony was reached in a letter from Jay to Deane, dated February 23, 1784, in which he said:

It is painful to say disagreeable things to any person, and especially to those with whom I have lived in habits of friendship. But candor forbids reserve. You were of the number of those who possessed my esteem, and to whom I was attached. I cannot express the regret I experienced from the cruel necessity I thought myself under of passing over the card and letter in silence; but I love my country and my honor better than my friends, and even my family. You are either exceedingly injured, or no friend to America; and while doubts remain on that point, all connection between us must be suspended. I wish to hear what you might have to say on that head, and should have named a time and a place for an interview, had not an insurmountable obstacle intervened to prevent it. I was told by more than one, whose information I thought I could rely on, that you received visits from, and were on terms of intimacy with, General Arnold. Every American who gives his hand to that man, in my opinion, pollutes it. I think it my duty to deal thus candidly with you, and assure you with equal sincerity that it would give me cordial satisfaction to find you able to acquit yourself in the judgment of the dispassionate and the impartial.

On May 3, Deane wrote Jay of "the insurmountable obstacle," saying:

One hour's conversation would do more to convince you that I am neither an enemy to our country nor intimate with General Arnold than a volume. I have no interest to deceive you with respect to General Arnold; on my first arrival in London twelve months since, he called on me abruptly two or three times,

and as it happened, there was company, some of them Americans, with me each time. The last time, as I waited him down, I requested him to discontinue his visits, which he did, and it is now ten months since I have seen him.

Deane exploded the charge of advising the British Ministry to pass measures unfriendly to American commerce, showing that his attitude had been the opposite of that attributed to him, that he never met Lord Suffield without a dispute on the commerce with the West Indies.

That Deane was not calling upon his imagination, when he wrote of the commercial charges, appears from a letter from Laurens to Livingstone, dated Bath, July 17, 1783, in which the writer says: "I was informed yesterday (and through pretty good authority, I speak only as from report) that Mr. Silas Deane, who has been in London about four months, has been an active hand in chalking out a treaty of commerce with us."

Deane's worry in this gloomy period was increased by the unjust charge of a dissolute member of the Webb family that Deane had defrauded the family, whereas for years Deane urged the appointment of auditors to settle everything in equity.

From a letter to Beaumarchais we learn the rigid and exacting conditions under which Barclay was to judge his case. Explicit vouchers were demanded for everything; the quality of clothing, cannon, fusees, and powder sent over seven years before was to be inquired into, and no money paid until Congress should approve. "The age of Methuselah," wrote Deane, "would be needed for your account and mine." In reality, it was half a century before the heirs of Beaumarchais and Deane were paid even a percentage of their just dues.

Deane's misery in London is disclosed in a letter to his brother Simeon, April 3, 1784, in which he says his name is again taken up, and from being a poor, distressed, and even a despised exile, he is spoken of as a man who influenced the counsels of nations and directed the late ministers in their measures concerning our commerce. He says: "Every American in Europe professes to believe this fully, and I expect, for a time at least, it will be received and credited without question, and hence my correspondence may be again intercepted."

He does not authorize his brother to contradict these reports, for

Though I sent you proofs of the falsity, strong as those of holy writ, or mathematical demonstration, it would avail nothing in the present temper of the

times. It is the general belief of my countrymen here that, but for the advice and information that I gave on my first arrival here, we should have been admitted to a free commerce with British West Indies, and every other part of the British Dominion, on the same terms as before separation.

This is untrue. The only interview he ever had with the ministers was long after the measure was taken, and the reason for his asking for an interview then was to persuade them to adopt a different plan, and lay our commerce open to the West Indies for everything, except the carrying of sugar to Europe, and he believes that would have been adopted had it not been for the sudden change in the Ministry.

I do not blame my countrymen [he sadly continues] for their suspicions of me; they know that I am a man greatly injured, that I have in fact been ungratefully proscribed and driven from my country, and they know that I am not devoid of passion and resentment, and the conclusion which they draw is natural, and though in present instance unjust, it would be to no purpose to attempt to convince them at present.

Deane's despondency, in view of the hopelessness of his political and financial situation, was relieved by tours among the manufacturing towns, to examine new inventions in machinery,

of most of which he made drafts, with the hope of introducing some of them into America.

Speaking of his accounts, he says Barclay is so tied up that there is no prospect of any settlement, especially as Congress has nothing to pay him.

It was while touring through the manufacturing districts of England, hoping to find some new avenue toward the recovery of his fortunes, that Deane had a sickening experience with a man who had been apparently one of his warmest friends, Henry Laurens, president of Congress.

In December 1783, while Deane was visiting Birmingham, Laurens reached the city, and seeing Deane and Dr. Priestly together, sought out a Mr. Russel, an intimate friend of Priestly's, and told him that Deane was unworthy of confidence on four counts. These were promptly delivered to Priestly, who had the frankness to give the information to Deane, who was able at once to refute them and retain the confidence and friendship of Priestly.

The four charges were as follows:

1. That Deane was poor and in no decent estimate before entering public life.
2. That he shipped two vessels with goods from France.
3. That while commissioner he intercepted

the despatch sent by Captain Folger, and put in blank paper.

4. That on his return he used every artifice to avoid being called to account.

Yet in conversation Laurens admitted that he did not doubt but the time would comewhen Deane would justify himself. Deane wrote a paper answering the four charges of Laurens. After reviewing his work in France up to the time of his recall, he says Laurens, president of Congress, received him with open arms, congratulated him on the prospect of disappointing his enemies, and said that he had always opposed the resolution for the recall.

Though warned by his knowledge of the enmity of Arthur Lee, William Lee, and Izard, and by Hosmer of Connecticut, an old student friend, that it was the plan of his enemies to undermine and destroy him by delay, Laurens' warm expression of friendship prevented Deane's entertaining the least doubt of his sincerity, and sixteen months went by while Deane waited, hoping that Congress would take action.

In that time Deane wrote forty-two applications for examination and decision, until at length he saw that Laurens was in conspiracy with the Lees and Izard to prevent his return.

As to the four charges:

1. Low estate and poverty. While member of Congress for two terms, Deane had served on many important committees and had an unlimited credit. Livingstone, Alsop, Maurice, and Lewis committed to his sole management a contract of forty thousand pounds, and with Livingstone and Alsop he had other large concerns in trade. He lived in the first style until the depreciation of the paper of Congress swept away the major part of his fortune, which was invested in bonds and mortgages. Compared with Laurens he was poor, but his money was not acquired by slavery, by the toil and distress of hundreds of slaves, or by consignments of negroes.

2. As to the sending over two ships with valuable cargo. Laurens knew that he had not enough money to purchase one half of one of them, but the insinuation was that the money came from the British government. Suppose he had sent over twenty ships, if he could do it without neglect of duty what occasion was there for criticism? But Laurens knew that his statement about even two ships on his own account was false. When Deane went to France he had arranged with Morris to appear there as a merchant, and a small brigantine was sent from Bordeaux, of which Deane



owned one third and Morris another third. That ship was captured by the English. Six months afterward a larger ship was sent out of which Morris owned one fourth, Deane one fourth, and a house in Paris one half, but with no profits owing to depreciation of money. "I put not a trunkful of goods on the vessels which carried military supplies, though I might have done it, as Laurens has every opportunity to know, for he has been many months in France."

3. Equally false was the charge concerning the "intercepted letters."

4. As to the reluctance for the investigation at the hands of Congress, Deane wrote many letters soliciting inquiry, and they were laid on the table.

I was with Mr. Laurens daily [wrote Deane]. I did not see beneath that solemn mask which he never puts off. Colonel Duer seemed interested in me, and when the coming to a resolution on my conduct could no longer be delayed, a motion was made to take the matter into consideration, that I might be detained no longer. There was no opposition, but just as the question was about to be put, Mr. Laurens, contrary to all precedent, rose, and with great appearance of candor and expressions of esteem for me, informed Congress that some weeks before he had received private letters from Mr. Izard, and as Mr. Izard wished him to show them to Colonel Duer, he desired that gentleman to call on him to jointly ex-

amine the letters to see whether it was proper to lay any part of them before Congress. Upon this Congress voted to postpone all action on me to some future day.

That evening Deane called on Laurens and was greeted by the solemn yet cordial president, who piously told him that his call must be by the direction of Divine Providence, for he was thinking of Izard's letters, which the two men proceeded to consider. Those letters were written in February, March, April, and June, 1778, and they contained little more than complaints of the conduct of Franklin and Deane in negotiating the treaties. Here is a sample: "How these gentlemen could take upon them to act so directly in opposition to their instructions I cannot conceive. Dr. Franklin has taken upon himself, expressly contrary to the instructions of Congress, to withhold the treaty from me." Of Deane he said:

I shall avoid entering into particulars respecting this gentleman, and shall only give my opinion of him, which is that if the whole world had been searched, I think it would have been impossible to find one more unfit for the office into which he has by the storm and convulsions of the times been shaken.

Of Franklin he wrote:

His abilities are great and his reputation high. Removed as he is from the observations of his con-

stituents, if he is not guided by principles of virtue and honor, those abilities and that reputation may produce the most mischievous effects. In my conscience I declare to you that I believe to be under no such internal restraints. . . . Nothing but my own observation could have convinced me so thoroughly how undeservedly it is possible to be bestowed. If anything was necessary to make the effrontery which I have complained of complete, it was Dr. Franklin's observation that if my observations were ever so just, it was now too late for any remedy. His tricks and chicanery put it out of my power to make any objection, before the treaties were signed and sent to America, and then he gives that as a reason why no remedy should be attempted. In my conscience I believe him to be an improper person to be intrusted with the management of the affairs of America in this kingdom. If sent to Vienna he will not have an opportunity of doing any harm.

One smiles at the following comment of the high-minded Izard on Franklin: "His tricks are in general carried on with so much cunning that it is exceedingly difficult to fix them on him."

After reading these illuminating letters together, Laurens, with professions of great friendship, asked Deane's advice whether he should suppress them as ebullitions of anger and resentment at some supposed neglect, or lay them before Congress. Deane saw through this flimsy schemer. "I plainly saw," says he, "that Laurens wished

me to advise the total suppression of the letters, which advice he could afterward turn into a request on my part, to give the contents greater force." Deane was too shrewd to fall into the snare, but told Laurens that he was too much interested to give advice, but the whole or none should be given to Congress; that Laurens was the proper judge; that the only charge against himself was haughtiness of temper and incapacity, while the charge against Franklin was breach of trust and a want of any principles either of virtue or honor, and that he could answer for his absent friend as fully as for himself; that no specific charge could be brought against either, which he would decline or evade answering.

Laurens seemed undecided, said Izard was passionate, but he was his friend, and to lay the matter before Congress would tend to hurt him. The next day Deane met Laurens coming out of Congress, and with melancholy voice the latter said, "I believe Mr. Izard will never forgive me, for I have laid the whole letters before Congress."

The only effect of the letters was to defer action on Deane's accounts. Every request for a hearing was refused, and on October 3, a letter from

Arthur Lee was read in Congress, which complained of Deane's unsettled accounts and extravagant contracts, not charging him with dishonesty, but only with imprudent management. Congress passed no censure, but kept silent, until Deane's public appeal of December 5, which was resented by Laurens, who, on the morning of its publication, left the chair because Deane reflected upon him, a fact which he thought should be noticed by the House. Finding the majority against him he resigned the presidency, and Jay was chosen in his place. From that hour Laurens became Deane's open and avowed enemy, and faction and disorder became so rife that contending parties took arms, and shed blood in the streets.

There is an interesting letter of Robert Morris to Deane, dated December 5, 1785, which sheds light on this gloomy chapter in Deane's life. The great financier says he could not take up any of Deane's manufacturing schemes for lack of funds; he advised him not to come to America, for he would risk a cool reception from those who persisted in attributing bad motives, and indifference from others who were convinced by Deane's assurances, but lacked the courage to avow their convictions. He continues:

Those few who have charged your errors to imprudence, not wickedness, being unable to stem the torrent, must give way to it. From the hand of time alone can you expect that the impression against you will be obliterated; but in the course of things, a time will come when people will be disposed to hear you and to believe, because of such an opportunity, the ultimate opinion.

A ray of comfort like this was meager enough to a proud man compelled to entreat his brother Barnabas to send him a few dollars to put bread into his mouth. At other times black night shut down upon him, as when, sick and helpless in 1788, he was robbed of his clothing, and of a part of his valuable papers, which were sold to the United States government. Deane suffered much through those years of isolation and poverty in England. At length he gave up all expectation of justice at the hands of Congress. Aside from the fact that his country was wallowing through the mire of financial depression, bankruptcy, and distress, occasioned by the long war and depreciation of the currency, he clearly saw that Congress would not vote to do him justice, because such a vote would virtually condemn the men who had for years so bitterly wronged him. In such a combination and succession of losses, misfortunes, and disappointments, we wonder that he

did not utterly lose heart and even mind; that he did not was no doubt due in some degree to the fact that he never lost the hope of reestablishing his fortune by some enterprise in America, toward which he was ever looking.

## CHAPTER XIV

### DEANE'S LAST ENTERPRISE AND ITS FAILURE

WE have noticed how Deane had tried in various ways to rebuild his shattered fortunes, and regain his standing in the business world.

In July, 1785, he wrote his stepson, S. B. Webb, that he was studying the manufacturing towns of England, had seen a machine which spun nearly five thousand threads at once; he was also interested in a corn mill; that he was intimately acquainted with inventors who were making immense fortunes; that he was writing to several friends in America about setting up mills.

About that time Deane proposed to the English Ministry a plan for a navigation canal from Lake Champlain to the St. Lawrence, via Chambly.

The fall is ninety feet, and, as early as 1775, he had brought the project before Holdimand and his successor, Lord Dorchester, governors of Quebec, to open the lake to ships from England.

Additional study deepened his conviction that it would be a valuable part of the system of inland



navigation which gave England five thousand miles of artificial waterways before the era of railways, and he gave the results of his studies to Lord Sydney, explaining that it would open an avenue from an extensive country to the West Indies, for the carriage of cattle, hogs, flour, lumber, and fish. He thought it could be built for ten thousand pounds, and he asked for the office of superintendent while building.

The enterprise commended itself to the influential men to whom he applied, but the health of the much-tried man was a question which must be reckoned with. On June 30, 1778, Deane wrote Lord Suffield that he was really too weak to write, that his fever was constant and increasing, that he was barely able to walk across the room. He says that three days before, while going as far as "Bird Cage Walk," he accidentally met Irwin, Lord Suffield's financial agent, and he relieved Deane's extreme want; Wilkinson had also assisted him with money. His friend Bancroft would gladly help him were it possible, but he was involved in vexatious lawsuits.

The language is realistic and touching; he writes:

I get but little rest at night, for my coughing is almost incessant, and my night-sweats, which but

lately afflicted me, are profuse, so that I have scarcely a thread of my linen dry in the morning. My appetite is gone; I have not eaten anything solid for more than ten days. Fruit, a poached egg beat up in milk, warm from the cow, with sugar, nutmeg, and some spirit in it, have been my sole nourishment, nor has my stomach at all times been able to bear even these; and I have frequently cold and aguish times of shivering. Excuse me, my lord, for being thus particular. I wish to lay my case simply and without exaggeration or coloring before you, that you may judge if I am obstinate in declining, I may say in refusing, to go on ship-board under these circumstances, and with a mind distracted with reflections on the past, the present, and the probable future.

In a word I may be carried on board, where want of fruit, of milk, of vegetables,—in a word, of proper attention, and of everything proper for a sick person,—with heat and calms on the passage, and violent equinoctial gales on the coast, which are almost certain at this season; these, which I do not color too highly, must cut short my voyage and prevent my ever landing in America, although the ship may go safe, and to persons in health it may be supportable.

But my physician is in favor of a voyage. My lord, when a physician has a patient whose disorder baffles him, he recommends to him a short voyage to sea or the watering places; or in short anywhere to get him out of the way, and off his hands. I have been to sea enough to know what it is in general, and how it affects me, even when in full health and with a mind at ease. I rely more on my friend Bancroft's opinion than on that of almost any physician. He knows my habits and temper, he has given up all

thoughts of my embarking in my present state, and until I can recover some degree of strength proportionate to the voyage.

Irwin does not think himself authorized to assist me out of your lordship's bounty in any way but in procuring passage to America. My wish is to remove to some healthy spot in the country for a few weeks, until I get stronger, and able to bear the fatigue of the voyage.

Deane had written to his brother to lend him a little money by which he hoped to go into the country, and he adds to Lord Suffield:

I may hear from my brother; but if there is no alternative left me but to embark in my present situation, or to suffer the last extremity here, my case is indeed a hard one. I have said perhaps too much, and I hope your lordship will not take it amiss when you reflect on my present distresses both of body and mind. Those of the former have been hard indeed, and those of the latter are such as I cannot describe; they push me at times to the verge of absolute distraction.

It is evident that Deane obtained help somewhere, for ten days after the letter to Lord Suffield, Edward Bancroft wrote to J. T. Townsend that he had procured the original drafts of Deane's observations on the canal, and inclosed them, and he adds that it was Deane's intention to go to Champlain that summer, if his observations were honored with Lord Sydney's approval. The

good doctor says: "I fear his health will not allow his venturing this season. He is going a little way out of town."

88 On August 10, 1778, Deane wrote his brother Barnabas in Hartford that he had been confined to his chamber in London most of the time since December by complications occasioned in part and largely increased by circumstances which at times almost unhinged his mind. He said that the assistance of a few friends had kept him from perishing, and that for a great part of the time he had scarcely been able to recollect one day what had passed on the preceding, and while in that state he had been plundered of clothes and valuable papers; that his health was much improved and that he should hope soon to undertake something for his future support, so that he would not be compelled to burden his friends.

His illness had seemed to destroy all prospects of business, and he did not expect it to return. His losses through his brother Simeon and the bankruptcy of M. Chaumont had ruined him beyond recovery; he nerved himself a little to say: "I cannot bear to go farther in the retrospect; I will try to look forward."

Then comes another shadow across the page, as he says:

The account of my son distresses me extremely. Should he be mad enough to come over here, I see nothing to prevent his absolutely perishing from want, as I am supported by the kindness, or I may say charity, of friends, which I have no right to expect the continuance of to myself, much less that it should be extended to him.

His son did not return to England, and Lord Dorchester and Lord Sydney gave their influence in favor of the canal, and, in the autumn of 1788, something of promise began to open, and the discouraged man could write, "This is on the whole the most promising object before me."

Then came the gloom, to which he was accustomed, as he says: "But, alas, without the enjoyment of health, or the means for even a present subsistence, what can I depend on? What can I do?"

On November 10, 1788, in a letter to his brother Barnabas, he said he had not written over three letters in twelve months, and that for a still longer period his health and distress of mind had beggared description, and without the least relief. A year before, he had caught a violent cold, which fell on his limbs which became palsied, so that he could scarcely help himself, but he had so far recovered that he hoped in the spring to set sail for America.

The past was still haunting him, as he writes: "I almost wish I could annihilate the power of recollection; but if past errors and misfortunes were to make us wise in the future, I ought to be one of the wisest of men for the rest of my life."

He says that previous to his illness he had formed a plan for going into business in England, but that prospect was gone, and the Champlain canal was his only hope. "To this," he writes, "my whole attention is turned at present, 'but the destruction of the poor is their poverty.'"

The winter was cold, the severest in fifty years, Deane's health delicate, the political situation in England doubtful, but the spring brought new hope, and while there was delay, plans slowly matured, and the exile gladly turned his eyes toward America.

A melancholy interest gathers around the fact that on June 25, 1789, Deane wrote three letters to prominent Americans, making a last plea for justice at the hands of Congress.

He wrote Jeremiah Wadsworth that he had long since ceased to expect the balance due him; but he desired that it might be fully known for the satisfaction of the public, and especially of his friends and family, whether or not he merited the treatment he had met or any part of it.

He wrote to George Washington that for more than ten years he had sought the settlement of his accounts, but with the new system of government he was making one more appeal. He adds: "Though reduced to the extremes of poverty and to an infirm and precarious state of health by what I have suffered, I still regard the past as of little consequence if I can obtain what I have long requested."

And to his honored friend, John Jay, after a long delay, Deane wrote, that he was encouraged to send him one more letter because he heard that Jay had inquired for him and expressed a wish for his return. Deane says:

This leads me to hope that the surmises and suggestions professed against me, having never in the remotest degree been substantiated, may be dissipated, and that any error in judgment, which is the utmost any one can charge me with, is fully expiated by what I have suffered.

After speaking of the charge of default, which for ten years he had tried to bring to trial, he urges the jurist to use his influence with the new administration to have the case taken up and decided; not because Deane expected any pecuniary return, but for the sake of his family, and

especially of his son, he wished to have the cloud removed from his name.

On June 29, 1789, Deane wrote William S. Johnson urging the plea, the valedictory appeal near the close of the years of misery. He says:

If I have in any instance betrayed, or been unfaithful in, the trust reposed in me by my country, let it be made to appear. Justice to the public calls for it as well as to the individual. I once more present my case before the tribunal of my country for a fair and full examination. I have been so long habituated to poverty, that I can bear it, however reluctantly, but injustice to my character is unsupportable.

By the generosity of a friend in Boston, it was arranged that Deane should bid good-by to the scenes of isolation and misery in England and sail for America in the Boston packet with Captain Davis.

On Tuesday, September 22, 1789, Deane drove as far as Gravesend with the captain, and the two spent the night there; in the morning they drove to Deal and embarked, and the voyage began. At ten o'clock, while walking the quarter-deck with the captain, Deane said he did not feel well; the complaint increasing, he was taken to the cabin, where he almost immediately became speechless, and continued so until his death, which occurred at two in the afternoon.

SEPT. 23, 1789



The death was probably due to a complication of disorders, the climax of a long period of illness and weakness, and the vessel returned at once to Deal for the burial of the disappointed man. The record of interment, which is dated September 26, 1789, is as follows:

Silas Deane Esquire. He was Deputy of the State of Connecticut to the first and second American Congress; a Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States of America to the Court of France in 1777, and 1778, died in the Downs on his passage from London to America. Register of Burials for the Parish of Deal.

There is no gravestone but the interment is believed to have been in the St. George's Churchyard.

Thus ended Deane's long course of trial and misfortune, as he was setting out upon an expedition which gave promise of financial profit and of a renewal in some degree of the prosperity which his superior business capacity and address had won for him in the earlier years. "Time, the nurse and breeder of all good," brought him little relief.

He died at the age of fifty-two; the Boston packet went on without him, leaving Silas Deane, disappointed for the last time.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE VINDICATION

WE are now far enough removed from the stormy scenes of prejudice and animosity, in which Deane's lot was cast, to judge calmly and impartially the career and the character, and pronounce an opinion which may have some approach to fairness.

Soon after his death on the merchant ship a few miles from Deal, there appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, the following notice:

7 Died in the Downs, September 23, on board the Boston packet, in his fifty-third year, after four hours' illness, Silas Deane, a native of Groton, Conn., member of the first and second Congresses, distinguished for his literary merits, mercantile knowledge, policy, and great zeal for liberty, and sequently, in 1776, appointed Ambassador by Congress to the Court of France.

Soon after his arrival at Paris he proved his ability by convincing the Court of France that their interest would be promoted by giving supplies to the American revolt. He purchased nearly half a million livres' worth, depending on promises; recalled, he refused

all kinds of payment, because not clear of suspicion of being not friendly to the independence of America.

This political maneuver and Congressional mode of discharging fair and honest debts by suspicions and accusations compelled Mr. Deane to leave France on a sudden, and finally take refuge in England, where he received generous and friendly support, while his eminent services and just demands on Congress were disregarded by his fellow-patriots in France.

Thus lived and died his excellency Silas Deane, whose name is rendered immortal in the calender of policy by having ruined himself and family, and deranged France and America, with the charming words, Liberty, Constitution, and Rights.

The epicedium of Mr. Deane may be this: He was second to very few in knowledge, plans, designs, and execution; deficient only in placing confidence in his compatriots, and doing them service, before he had got his compensation, of which no well-bred politician was ever guilty.

Newspapers in England and America celebrated Deane's passage from a world

Of struggle, and temptation, and retreat,

with scarcely a tender thought, though they said that he was an illustration of the most remarkable versatility of fortune which has occurred perhaps within the present century; that he lived in great affluence at the Court of France, and was presented by Louis XVI. with his picture

set with brilliants, as a mark of respect on account of his integrity and ability; but that the charge of embezzlement led to his exile in Holland, where his situation was little better than starving, and afterward to life in England, where he would have died of want, had not a gentleman of fashion been an eye-witness that he not only wanted food, but a bed to lie on; that a collection of about seventy pounds was made for him. So reduced was he, that though he was supposed to have embezzled upwards of a hundred thousand pounds, he practically refuted the malevolence of his enemies by experiencing all the horrors of the most abject poverty, dying on ship-board on his way to America—his last resort. The finishing touch of the malice and falseness of Deane's enemies was given in an article which was published in London the next year after his death. It was entitled, "Theodosius, or a Solemn Admonition to Protestant Dissenters." The author is supposed to have been the Reverend Philip Withers.

The narrative of this highly imaginative writer begins with these words: "The last time I saw Mr. Silas Deane he was on a bed of sickness and death; he sent for me." Then the author proceeds to relate a conversation which he says passed

between himself and Deane in which the latter is made to "deny the existence of the Deity." Being asked to "name the wretch" who had infused into his mind "such horrid blasphemies," he is said to have named Dr. Priestly: and to have added, "Yes, Dr. Priestly was my instructor, my savior, and my God."

Why this writer, whom we refrain from characterizing, did not consult Priestly before publishing a statement so damaging in that age, can be as easily explained as can many other things said about Deane while he was alive.

The refutation is complete. The alleged dying atheist, according to the written account of Captain Davis, after eating a hearty breakfast with him at Gravesend, went on shipboard with the captain, and the vessel started immediately; about ten o'clock he became suddenly ill, was carried to the cabin, and there for the first and only time was laid upon his deathbed, on the bed on which he died, and there, almost immediately, he became speechless, and continued so until his death, which occurred about two o'clock, four hours later. The captain mentioned several persons who were with Deane while on his deathbed, all of whom appear to have belonged to the ship. None of them were able to comprehend any of the in-

articulate sounds when the dying man attempted to speak.

Dr. Bancroft declares that this post-mortem slander was absolutely false. He wrote: "I never heard him intimate, much less profess, any disbelief in the Deity. On the contrary, I believe on very good grounds that his religious sentiments were exactly the same as those he had avowed in France to several of his friends."

We pass now from that trying, feverish period through the calmer years to see what has been the judgment of the country upon Silas Deane. We find abundant illustration of that quality in human nature of which Shakespeare spoke when he wrote:

Men's evil manners live in brass; their virtues  
We write in water.

It is the fashion of some writers on the men and events of the Revolution to speak disparagingly of Deane. All admit his ability within certain limits and a measure of success in his mission to France, but some give evidence of imperfect knowledge of the man's life and work, and in some instances reveal an apparent willingness to condemn him on hearsay.

Evidently these writers have not read the

testimony of Franklin, who was intimately associated with him in Paris, as to his integrity, energy, and success; or that of Beaumarchais to Deane's devotion and address which made his work indispensable; or that of the austere, honest, if sometimes crabbed, John Adams, Deane's successor as Commissioner, who would as soon falsify as omit to read his Bible every morning, who wrote in his immortal Diary in 1778: "Mr. Deane lived expensively and seems not to have had much order in his business, public or private; but he was active, diligent, subtle, and successful, having accomplished the great purpose of his mission to advantage."

Surely the calm, judicial intelligence of John Jay ought to have some weight in a matter of this kind. Jay wrote Deane, March 28, 1781:

You merit the thanks, not the reproaches, of your country. I believe you innocent of the malversations imputed to you, and I feel for you the sympathy which such an opinion must create in every honest mind. In this enlightened age, when the noise of passion and party shall have subsided, the voice of truth will be heard and attended to.

The opinion of Robert Morris should not be overlooked. He wrote in 1781 to Deane that his character had been exceedingly traduced, and he

longed to see it placed "in that respectable and meritorious point of view which it deserves."

Again, and in 1785, he wrote: "From the hand of time alone can you expect that the impression against you will be obliterated; but in the course of things a time will come when people will hear and believe."

The statement of so honest and careful a man as Franklin, given when Deane was recalled in 1778, should have decided weight. He said:

I have no doubt that he will be able clearly to justify himself, but having lived intimately with him more than fifteen months, the greatest part of the time in the same house, and a constant witness of his public conduct, I cannot avoid giving this testimony, though unasked, that I esteem him a faithful, active, and earnest minister, who, to my knowledge, has done in various ways great and important services to his country, whose interests I wish may always by every one in her employ be as much and as efficiently promoted.

Some of these statements have been given on earlier pages, but they belong here also in the sum of the testimony, of which most of the writers on the period under consideration seem ignorant.

They are apparently ignorant also of the action of Congress, fifty-three years after Deane's death, by which the foolish rumor of embezzlement was



exploded, and his reputed claims for justice acknowledged.

This calls for a description of the memorial of the heirs of Deane, which was presented to Congress, January 10, 1835, and which led to the official vindication.

We have spoken of Deane's son Jesse, who was with his father in Europe and returned to America in 1783. He died in 1830, leaving a daughter Philura, who married Horatio Alden, and five years after the death of Jesse Deane, Mr. and Mrs. Alden presented to Congress a memorial which reviewed the case from the time of Deane's appointment until his death, calling to mind that his reputation, in the judgment of Congress, was high, from the fact that, in 1775, he was solely and exclusively employed by the Marine Committee to equip and fit out a large naval force, and that he may be called the "Father of the Revolution Marine."

The memorial goes on to explain that his mission to France for military supplies was successful; that in March, 1777, he was recalled "with all possible dispatch," since "it is of the greatest importance that Congress at this critical juncture be well informed of the state of affairs in Europe," with no reference to his accounts, which were de-

manded on the two audiences he had with Congress,—the only ones in fourteen months, though he wrote repeatedly for an opportunity to state his case.

Assured of the appointment of an auditor by Congress, Deane returned to France, and for more than a year was engaged with a clerk, at heavy expense. Joshua Johnson declined to act as auditor because of the conditions imposed, and for two years after Deane's dismissal there was no auditor. At length Barclay was appointed, but his instructions did not cover Deane's case.

After the publication of the nine private letters in the *Royal Gazette* Deane was proscribed at home and abroad. An exile in Ghent for a year and a half, he lived in cheap lodgings, seeing only those he could not avoid.

On May 22, 1782, Congress appointed a commissioner to settle all accounts. Not till then did Barclay feel authorized to act on Deane's case, and even then he could not close it.

In 1783, a committee consisting of Arthur Lee, McHenry, and Gerry, was appointed to investigate Deane's claims. This committee recommended that he be allowed his expenses from March, 1776, to January 4, 1778, and salary as commissioner, also allowance of commissions of

five per cent. to the time of his appointment as ambassador.

Thus the right of Deane was fairly and fully admitted. Probably this report never came to his attention, and there is no evidence that Congress took action on this report. In the correspondence that followed between Deane and Barclay it was made clear that all questionable items must be referred to the immediate decision of Congress, which was a practical denial of justice, and indefinite postponement of the decision.

On September 30, 1784, Barclay sent the accounts to Robert Morris, Superintendent of Finance, who referred them to the president of Congress, but no action was taken. For nearly six years Deane had sought settlement: he was poor, his credit as a merchant ruined, he was driven to resort to friends in a manner his proud spirit disdained, but he was determined never to return to his country till his accounts were settled. Denounced and proscribed, his mental energies gave way, and from 1784 he gave up all hope of settlement.

Four months before his death an effort was made by the government to get possession of Deane's account and letter book, to the distress of the owner.

Congress had voted a meager allowance to

Deane, which was declined as wholly inadequate and unfair; and though Congress made good to Arthur Lee the loss of nearly ten thousand dollars, due to depreciation of currency, no such offer was made to Deane.

The memorial states that Franklin's testimony of December 18, 1783, to Deane's integrity was invaluable, and that when Robert Morris closed his official relations to the public treasury he spoke of the balances due Deane and a few others, saying:

It is much lamented that these are not paid. As to Mr. Deane, he stands in such peculiar circumstances that it would be odious to say anything in favor of his claims, if the citizens of America were governed by passion and caprice, instead of reason and reflection. But they know that whatever may have been his services and sufferings, or whatever may be his follies and faults, neither can affect the present question. His claim of justice is not mended by his merits, nor curtailed by his crime. Whether he is criminal or innocent must be decided on hereafter by that unerring tribunal from which there is no appeal. But even admitting his guilt, it would be folly to justify it by withholding his due.

The committees of Senate and House to which this memorial was referred, after several years of investigation, reported favorably, and, in 1842, Congress appropriated thirty-seven thousand dol-

lars to Deane's heirs, on the ground that the former audit made when Arthur Lee was Commissioner of Accounts was "ex parte, erroneous, and a gross injustice to Silas Deane."

Thus, more than half a century after the death of Deane, the action of Congress, which Deane vainly sought for years, was taken, a part of the money due him was paid his heirs, and that which he desired more earnestly than the money, the vindication from the charge of embezzlement, ✓ accomplished.

The question now arises, what is the verdict of history as to the work and character of Deane. There can be no question about the ability, efficiency, and energy of the man. We have ample testimony to his effectiveness. He was undoubtedly a man who stands in the front rank of the leaders of the Revolution, and had it not been for the malicious disparagement of Arthur Lee, he would stand to-day with Franklin, Morris, and Jay.

After an interval of one hundred and thirty years it is time to recognize his great services, and acknowledge the priceless debt the Republic owes Deane for his inestimable work for the insurgents struggling for independence.

The other question, that of character, is more

difficult, and different minds will judge differently the "intercepted letters."

We must set aside as altogether erroneous the notion that Deane was guilty of treason. He did become discouraged, and he wrote some private letters when cast down, and at a time when news from America was peculiarly discouraging. He failed of that grace

That can translate the stubbornness of fortune  
Into so quiet and so sweet a style,

as to be calm and wise amid trials and disasters. But Silas Deane was never a traitor. There is not the slightest evidence that he was ever on familiar terms with General Arnold while in London, or that he was in the pay of the British Ministry. Those who made the charges were either Deane's deadly enemies or men reckless with facts.

Those nine letters, written under a fearful strain of disappointment, poverty, neglect, and calumny, were published by Tories who knew how to make the most of them. Deane says they changed them to suit their purpose.

✓ We wish he had not written those letters. We have done some things almost as foolish, but our insignificance has usually shielded us from disgrace, and we have had opportunity to profit by

our blunders. Less happy was Deane; his mistake was caught up greedily by his enemies and used to ornament and advertise the lies they had industriously circulated. We cannot conceive of Olympian men like Washington or Franklin writing such letters, but the Olympians are in a select and lonely class. We wish some things could be erased from the biographies of Moses, David, Elijah, Luther, and Garfield. We would rather not be judged by things said and done when we were down-hearted; and no one with any knowledge of human nature, or any pretense to justice, would set aside the valuable and devoted service of years, and blot with infamy an entire life, because a man, hounded and conspired against, in a moment of weakness lost his poise, and allowed his pen to describe the blur and confusion engendered by a mind almost distraught by suffering and disaster.

It requires no special pleading to make out a case for Deane. For years he was in a prison, whose walls were a concrete of massive and determined conspiracy. Brave men as he have grown discouraged under conditions trying as his. Elijah flung himself upon the ground and longed for death; John the Baptist in the prison of Machærus questioned whether his message was a mistake; Savona-

rola dared to face angry councils, but he wavered in the prison-cell of Florence; Jerome of Prague in the dungeon of Constance recanted his faith, then gathered courage and died a martyr; even Luther was agitated by fantasies of incipient madness in the castle of Wartburg, and we gladly throw a veil over the serious blunders of his later life.

There were many who were depressed over the condition of the country, and even after Yorktown regretted the Revolution, but they were more fortunate than Deane. There is a letter of Israel Putnam, written after the war, in which this man, whose patriotism and sincerity no one questions, says that, in view of the wretched condition of business and finance, and the many evils rising on all sides, he longed for the days when the colonies were under British rule, and if he could have looked forward, he would not have entered the war.

Robert Morris, the financier of the Revolution, ruined himself and many others, and spent months in a debtor's prison; yet we do not forget his eminent services for his country.

Years of suffering from a malignity, and a conspiracy as pitiless as determined, wrought in Deane's mind despair for a country whose Con-



gress could ignore plain justice in dealing with him. The iron hand of desperation fell heavily on a nature ungifted with dauntless hopefulness.

It is not easy for us in the security and wealth of prosperous years to imagine the condition of affairs when Deane wrote the fatal letters. America seemed at the lowest ebb, politically, financially, and in the army, to the lonely, homesick man, walking the streets of Paris, brooding in his dreary lodgings, listening to dismal stories, wafted across the sea, of faction, repudiation, and mutinous soldiers; pondering his own wrongs, having long breathed the atmosphere of suspicion, of accusation, covert and pronounced; determined not to return to the hostility of a country so dominated by his enemies, where just and friendly men were perplexed by the stories ingeniously scattered by his shrewd foes; unable to go into business in Paris. It is not strange in conditions like these that Deane should have made a serious mistake.

Simple humanity requires us to bring the quality of mercy to our judgment of a man who for four years and a half had endured the depressing stress of suffering and disappointment, the continued assaults of malice, the unjust delays, the temptations of a disposition naturally de-

ficient in buoyant optimism, the sure approach of poverty dreaded by a spirited man, the mental anarchy occasioned by worry, insomnia, repeated attacks of misfortune, and heart-sickening disappointments.

It is not strange that Deane should take a gloomy view of the future of his country in that critical summer of 1781—dark enough to Washington as we know by history; a nightmare of a summer to a man like Deane, tortured by a sense of personal wrongs, and alarmed at the thought of the dismal future into which his country seemed to be plunging.

It is not strange that under such conditions Deane should open his heart to a few friends in letters strictly private, in which he asked if some method might not be discovered to stop the fearful war, while it could be done with honor.

Think of the career of this man,—the early zeal, devotion, and achievements; the mission to France and its success; the hostility of powerful leaders; the paralysis of Congress; the undertow of disparagement; the studied neglect; the varnished falseness; encroaching, overwhelming poverty; the newspaper lies; hopes blossoming then fading; the death of his wife and breaking up of his home; the ill-health of his son; the stiff fight

to pay bills and keep up courage; illness and death under the shadow and burden; the passing away of the tortured Commissioner from the cabin of the packet, his last hope slipping through his nerveless and trembling fingers, as his eyes, wearied with gazing across the waters toward Congress, glaze in death.

We, who look through the steady years to that scene of struggle, of pathetic endeavor, of gathering sorrows, of threatening ruin, see an able and honest man, a true patriot, a skillful and effective executive, whose deeds deserve the gratitude of the Republic; whose mistakes in a world like this, made under heavy strain, in the deep gloom that just preceded the dawn, ought not to overwhelm with dire condemnation a man who on the whole was true to his country.



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